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# SHOCK

## CINEMA

Number 20 / Spring-Summer 2002

Canada: \$ 7.00 / \$ 5.00

Including interviews with

**MICHAEL  
MORIARTY**

THE STUFF, Q,  
WHO'LL STOP THE RAIN

— AND —

screenwriter

**W. D.  
RICHTER**

BUCKAROO BANZAI,  
INVASION OF THE  
BODY SNATCHERS ('78)

— AND —

exploitation auteur

**LEE FROST**

LOVE CAMP 7, HOT SPUR,  
RACE WITH THE DEVIL



**JOSEPH TURKEL**

BLADE RUNNER, THE SHINING

PLUS

**KEITH DAVID**

PLATOON, THEY LIVE, John Carpenter's THE THING

Reviewed in this issue:

Halls of Anger

Diana Rigg's The Diadem  
and Mini-Killers

I Start Counting • Ice

Captain Milkshake

Here We Go Round  
the Mulberry Bush

The Runaway • Duffy

My Old Man's Place

Le Couple Témoin

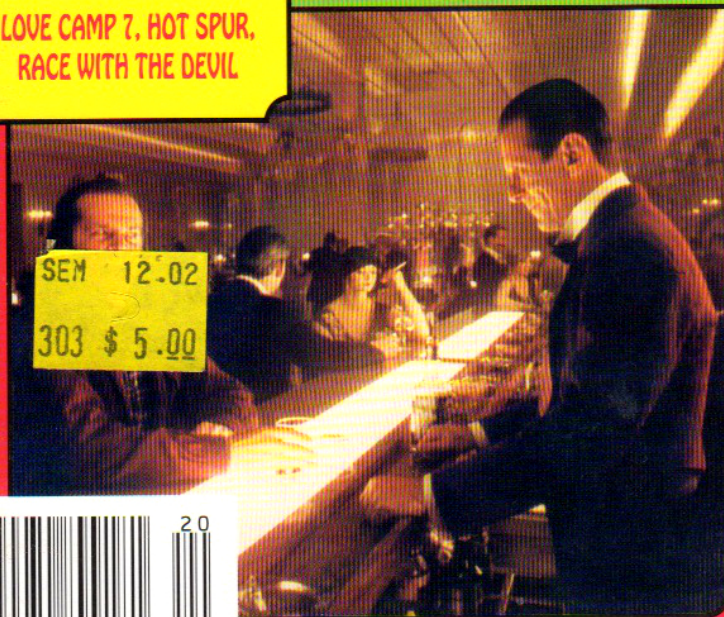
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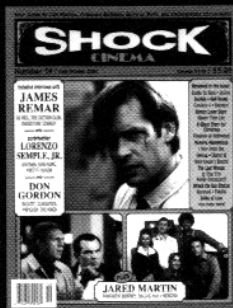
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## SHOCK CINEMA Back Issues



**SC 19. Fall/Winter 2001. \$5.** Interviews with James Remar, Don Gordon, Jared Martin, and Lorenzo Semple Jr. Reviews include *Gonks Go Beat*, *Demon Lover Diary*, *I Saw Jesus Die*, *Stardust*, *A Ghost Story for Christmas*, *Inchon*, *Deafula*, *Norwood*, *Bigger Than Life*, and many more!

**SC 18. Spr./Summer 2001. \$5.** Interviews with Victor Argo, Jesse Vint, Kinji Fukasaku. Reviews include *Dying of Laughter*, *A Cold Wind in August*, *The Owl Service*, *Stakeout on Dope Street*, *Kenny & Company*, *Felidae*, *Bleeder*, *Alan Clarke's Christine* & *Elephant*, *Mondo Candido*, etc.



**SC 17. Fall/Winter 2001. \$5.** Interviews with Paul Morrissey, Eddie Deezen, Philip D'Antoni, Carol Speed. Reviews include *The She-Rat*, *Strangers in the City*, *Steam Bath*, *Pearls Before Swine*, *Synanon*, etc.

**SC 16. Spr./Summer 2000. \$5.** Interviews with Julius W. Harris, Marilyn Joi, Michael Campus, Sid Haig. Reviews include *Play It As It Lays*, *Zebra Killer*, *Baby Love*, *Of Freaks and Men*, *Ghostwatch*, *Uplight*, etc.

**SC 15. Fall/Winter 1999. \$5.** Interviews with Fred Williamson, Hugh Keays-Byrne. Reviews include *Je T'Aime Je T'Aime*, *The Story of Mankind*, *The Milky Life*, *Brother Theodore Speaks*, *The Cool World*, etc.

**SC 14. Spring/Summer 1999. \$5.** Interviews with Paul Koslo, A.C. Stephen, Haji. Reviews include *Go Ask Alice*, *Coming Apart*, *Forty Deuce*, *Stop Calling Me Baby!*, *Mark IV Rapture movies*, *Radio On*, etc.

**SC 13. Fall/Winter 1998. \$5.** Interviews with Don Stroud and Russ Meyer. Reviews include *Who Are You Polly Maggoo?*, *Punishment Park*, *Pound*, *Death in Small Doses*, *Dirty Weekend*, *That Man Bolt*, etc.

**SC 12. Spring/Summer 1998. \$5.** Interview with William Smith. Reviews include *Skatetown U.S.A.*, *Werewolf of Woodstock*, *Violent Playground*, *Gong Show Movie*, *Evil Roy Slade*, *Alabama's Ghost*, etc.

**SC 11. Fall/Winter 1997. \$5.** Reviews include *Trans-Europ-Express*, *The Big Cube*, *Dennis Hopper's The American Dreamer*, *They Call Her One-Eye*, *Forced Entry*, *Charlotte*, *Vigilante Force*, *Chubasco*, etc.

**SC 10. Spring/Summer 1997. \$5.** Reviews include *The Phynx*, *Kid Blue*, *Bike Boy*, *Burst City*, *A Man Called Dagger*, *Pets*, *The Power*, *The Pusher*, etc.

**SC 9. Fall/Winter 1996. \$5.** Reviews include *Blast of Silence*, *Dusty and Sweets McGee*, *The Maltese Bippy*, *Black Moon*, *Dirty Little Billy*, *Timothy Leary's Turn On*, *Tune In*, *Drop Out*, *The Orkley Kid*, etc.

**SC 8. Spring/Summer 1996. \$5.** Reviews include *Daisies*, *Let My Puppets Come*, *Who Killed Teddy Bear?*, *God's Angry Man*, *Pink Narcissus*, *The Candy Snatchers*, *Moonchild*, *Chastity*, *Bad Boy Bubby*, etc.

**SC 7. 1995. \$4.** Reviews include *The Touchables*, *Beyond Love and Evil*, *The Saragossa Manuscript*, *Privilege*, *Flaming Creatures*, *Cool Breeze*, etc.

**SC 6. 1994. \$4.** Reviews include *Farewell Uncle Tom*, *Timothy Carey's The World's Greatest Sinner*, *Skidoo*, *The Chelsea Girls*, *Vapors*, *Chafed Elbows*, *Shell Life*, *Young Playthings*, *Wedding Trough*, etc.

Welcome to the 20th issue of SHOCK CINEMA! You know, when I first conceived of this mag, it was simply a crude review-fanzine that I pounded out on my electric typewriter — as I ranted about obscure movies most people didn't even know existed. Nowadays, it's a slick(ish) publication that turns up in corporate-chain bookstores, and profiles cool actors and filmmakers that I grew up watching and admiring. Still, with the exception of my excellent contributors, it's basically a one-man operation. I personally review most of the movies, as well as all of the books & 'zines. I also lay out the entire mag on my ancient computer; scan the photos and advertisements; carefully touch up the old ad slicks; proof-read everything (but even with my wife's help, mistakes still slip through); harass distributors who owe me thousands of dollars but take their goddamn time paying up; and personally stuff, stamp and mail out subscriber copies — so everyone receives the issue before it hits store shelves. Yeah, it's a hellish amount of work, without a lot of financial payoff, but I love it. And I hope you enjoy each issue half as much as I enjoy pulling it together at 4 a.m., with a stomach full of Bushmills and a month-long case of the flu. For this issue, I've cut back a bit on my usual avalanche of reviews (I'm still reviewing over 40 titles, so I'm not a total slacker), because this edition contains FIVE amazing interviews! First, there's **Michael Moriarty**, who's best known to mainstream viewers for *LAW AND ORDER*. But I've been a longtime fan of his exceptional work, in jolting films such as *WHO'LL STOP THE RAIN* and eccentric faves like *Q: THE WINGED SERPENT*...There's also the immensely talented **Keith David**, whose diverse acting career has ranged from the Broadway stage and the Oscar-winning *PLATOON*, to kick-ass genre fare like John Carpenter's *THE THING*, *THEY LIVE* and *PITCH BLACK*...**Joseph Turkel** is best known for roles in *THE SHINING* and *BLADE RUNNER*, but he's also appeared in both acclaimed gems (*PATHS OF GLORY*) and memorable cheapies (*VILLAGE OF THE GIANTS*)...There's also screenwriter **W.D. Richter**, who penned the cult classics *BUCKAROO BANZAI* and *BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA*, and has worked with the likes of James Caan, Peter Bogdanovich and Robert Redford...Finally, if you're an exploitation fanatic, you've undoubtedly enjoyed the work of writer-director **Lee Frost**, whose amazing career has ranged from sleaze epics (*LOVE CAMP 7*) to

drive-in gems (*CHROME AND HOT LEATHER*)... No question, this is one hell of a line-up.

While designing this issue, I noticed an odd trend when it came to my own reviews. Almost every movie in the 'Film Review' section is from the '60s and '70s. It's almost as if I felt the need to return to the rebellious films of my youth, as some type of unconscious backlash against the last six months of government hypocrisy — as well as the public's blind allegiance to authority. Sorry, but I've never trusted politicians and that attitude hasn't changed, and while we all agree that 9/11 was an ungodly tragedy, did we have to give up all cynicism and free thought in its wake — even as Ground Zero evolves into fucking tourist trap? Half the country believed George W. was a barely sentient monkey-boy on September 10th, but now it's almost treasonous to say he's a corporate puppet with the IQ of ear wax, who was also in bed with the scumwads at Enron. Well, I'm sick of it, so for this issue I embraced plenty of old-fashioned, cynical values, like political dissent, sexual confusion, heated social issues, and brainless exploitation — ranging from Robert Kramer's caustic and thought-provoking *ICE* to drive-in drivel like *SIX PACK ANNIE*. There's racial tension, hippie hysteria, teens in trouble, Nam vets returning home, and quirky writers like Terrence Malick and Donald Cammell pissed off at how their early scripts were ruined by studio hacks.

**SUBSCRIPTION PRICES:** Single copies are \$5 (postpaid) and a 4-issue subscription is \$18 (with all checks made out directly to Steven Puchalski). All issues are shipped via First Class Mail, and when sending in a first-time sub, please mention which issue you'd like to begin with. Subscribers can keep track of their final issue by checking their mailing label's top right corner... Overseas copies are \$8 apiece, and \$32 gets you a 2-year sub (US currency only)...I'm always looking for new interview possibilities, so if you're in touch with any SHOCK CINEMA-esque celebs, please drop me a line. All outside contributions must be submitted on disc or via email, since I don't have the time or patience to transcribe...But you didn't buy this mag for my rambling (and if you're just sitting in a bookstore, reading the thing — pony up the five lousy bucks and purchase it, you deadbeat!). I'm off to finish the rest of the issue — and get another drink. Enjoy. 3/20/02

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The ad deadline for SC #21 is **August 10, 2002**. Space is limited, so reserve it ASAP. All checks must be made payable directly to Steven Puchalski. Ad rates are:

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Note: ALL potential review materials must arrive in my P.O. Box before August 10th! You snooze, you lose!

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**Cover photos:** Top: Michael Moriarty from *LAW AND ORDER*. Bottom left: Jack Nicholson & Joe Turkel in *THE SHINING*. Bottom right: Keith David in *PLATOON*.

EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS



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## "KICKING ASS AND TAKING NAMES"





# EVERY LAST DETAIL: An Interview With Actor MICHAEL MORIARTY

By HARVEY F. CHARTRAND

Born in Detroit in 1941, Michael Moriarty is one of the great leading-man character actors of his generation. Gifted in the arts from an early age, Moriarty studied at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (LAMDA) in the early 1960's. His considerable talent and range were recognized early on and led to critically-acclaimed roles as a baseball pitcher who befriends a dying Robert DeNiro in *BANG THE DRUM SLOWLY* (1973) and as a cold-blooded duty officer in *THE LAST DETAIL* (1973) with Jack Nicholson. Moriarty also appeared in the splendid TV adaptation of Tennessee Williams' *THE GLASS MENAGERIE* (1973), with Katherine Hepburn; and in the controversial gay-themed Broadway play *FIND YOUR WAY HOME* (1974).

With three back-to-back appearances in three different media, Moriarty took the New York entertainment critics by storm. His performance as the 'gentleman caller' in *THE GLASS MENAGERIE* won him an Emmy Award as the year's best supporting actor, while his role as the angry homosexual Julien Weston in *FIND YOUR WAY HOME* garnered him a Best Actor Tony Award, beating out such veterans as George C. Scott and Zero Mostel. Moriarty endured a career setback after his star turn as a tormented policeman in *REPORT TO THE COMMISSIONER* (1975) was savaged by critics, although *REPORT* is now considered in the same league as *SERPICO* and *PRINCE OF THE CITY* as one of the finest police corruption dramas ever made. Yet the damage was done to Moriarty's career. He dropped off the A-list and started making B-pictures, including a series of subversive horror films for maverick director Larry Cohen.

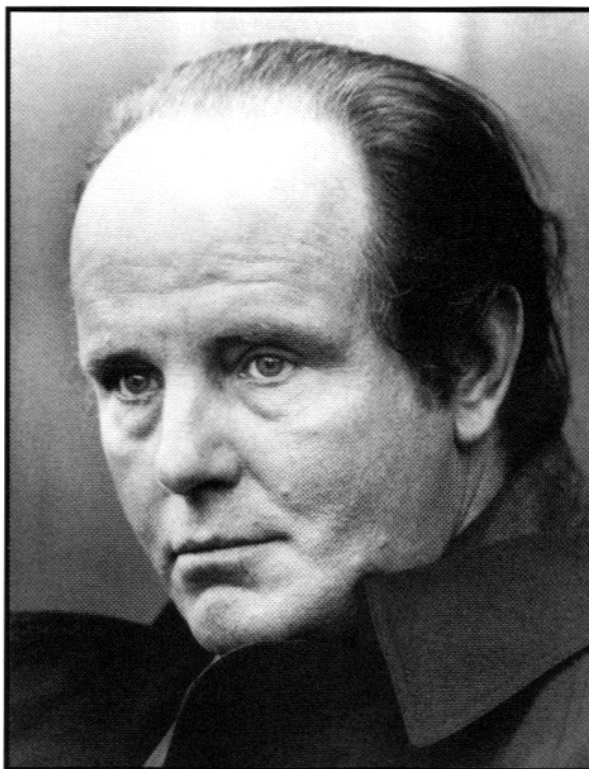
From the mid-seventies on, Moriarty's greatest success lay in the medium of television. He won a Golden Globe for his chilling performance as the young Nazi Erik Dorf in the landmark 1978 mini-series *HOLOCAUST*, and achieved quasi-immortality as the earnest and relentless assistant district attorney Ben Stone in the first four seasons of *LAW AND ORDER*. In a move many regarded as career suicide, Moriarty left the hit series in 1994, after a disastrous meeting with U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno and network television executives in Washington, D.C. Incensed by *LAW AND ORDER* producer Dick Wolf's seeming acquiescence to "Reno's campaign to end violence on television by trampling on rights of free expression as guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution," Moriarty left the U.S. in protest to begin the life of an expatriate in Canada. A landed Canadian immigrant, Moriarty now lives in Vancouver. *SHOCK CINEMA* interviewed the controversial actor in Fall 2001, while he was wrapping his scenes as an Air Force colonel in the UFO mini-series *TAKEN*, directed by Tobe Hooper and executive produced by Steven Spielberg.

**SHOCK CINEMA:** Could we discuss your early stage triumphs, favorite plays and some of the actors you worked with on Broadway?

Michael Moriarty: I wrote three of the plays I performed in. *FLIGHT TO THE FATHERLAND* is autobiographical. It's about my father, my mother and me. The ghost of my mother comes back and follows me around as I try to drag myself back to normality. I had a very bad

time after I came back from England. My father allowed the school that I was attending to throw me into a psychiatric hospital when I was 22. He let them keep me there for three months. They then threw me back in his lap — a basket case!...During one rehearsal, I believe my mother's soul invaded the actress portraying her! The performance that she was giving was so awesome, it scared her. She never did it again.

The second play I wrote, *THE BALLAD OF DEXTER CREED*, was the result of a contretemps between myself and John Simon — the Dracula of Manhattan theatre criticism. He took no prisoners.



One night, I started ragging on him at a party. He was certain to get me later. I remounted *RICHARD III* at Stratford (Connecticut). Simon was not invited, but he invited himself. Simon knew he couldn't hurt me, so he cruelly and viciously obliterated every one of my young actors...I played three roles in *DEXTER CREED*. Two of the roles were prerecorded. I'm on stage as a young actor waiting for John Simon to show up. He speaks a kind of Esperanto. I did the voice of the theatre critic and the voice of a young embittered actor whose mother had died of a heart attack from a theatre critic's judgment of her in a major newspaper. The leading lady was Linda Kozlowski. I knew she was the kind of girl that John Simon would fall in love with, and he gave her a great review! (laughter) She was just his type — absolutely physically perfect. He's an old bird-dog, old John.

My third play, *A SPECIAL PROVIDENCE*, is about how Shakespeare meets me and I meet God. I performed it in Toronto and LA. *Variety* gave it a rave review when I played the Matrix Theatre in LA in '96.

On *THE TRIAL OF THE CATONSVILLE NINE*, I

worked with Sam Waterston and a bunch of other guys from my generation, like James Woods. Thirty years on, I think the Berrigan brothers were duped. They fell for liberation theology and I bought it too.

**SC:** You performed Eugene O'Neill's *LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT* at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., during Bicentennial Year.

Moriarty: That was the hardest experience I ever had in the theatre. The big problem was that Jason Robards, Jr. presumed to play the father and direct it as well. You can't do that. Walter McGinn and Kevin Conway both had to play the role of my brother, the role that Jason had played years before, and they weren't the least bit like him. Jason beat Walter's confidence down until he broke his fist on stage and left. Walter was a sweet puppy, an alcoholic. Not long after that, he drove his car off the road and was killed. Stella Adler came to see the play and said I was wonderful.

The production concept wasn't working. The first scenes were being directed and played by Jason for cheap laughs. I know you don't want to start the play in darkness, because that's where it's headed, but you shouldn't bend the early scenes of a great, realistic play into a sitcom. Nothing in the writing, or in the history of the O'Neill/Tyrone family, supports it.

It was badly conceived. Jason finally gave up the ghost and brought in directors to doctor the show. He called in Jose Quintero, and the show was incredible while he was there. The ghost of O'Neill walked in with Quintero and suddenly everything started going right. I got more aggressive on stage instead of holding back, and Jason and Kevin started backing off some of their shtick. And then the show really took off! It was frightening how powerful the play was, to all of us. For a few nights, we achieved greatness. But then Quintero left and the magic went with him.

So Jason called in Harold Clurman, who performed some magic too. Harold, shaking his fist in mock anger — a wonderful device he used to make us laugh while getting his serious point across — told the actors the key to the play. He said: "You gotta play like you're madly in love with each other! You can't dwell on the negatives. You do these ugly things to each other because you love each other!" Suddenly, the bells go off, but our bad habits had already been ingrained. There were four actors in four different universes and the play was doomed. If Jason had produced and hired either Harold or Jose to direct, we would have had the greatest production of *LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT* you ever saw.

**SC:** Your first film role is in the seldom-seen *MY OLD MAN'S PLACE* (1972), a tale of returning Vietnam vets. Leonard Maltin describes it as "not profound, but moody and interesting." How did this low-budgeter portray the returning Viet vet?

Moriarty: "Moody" and troubled. One of the moodiest ones, played by Mitch Ryan, is psychotic. My role would be diagnosed as "borderline self-destruct." It's one of the first anti-Vietnam films and America wasn't ready to look back at their sins until a decade later with Oliver Stone's *PLATOON*.



**SC: Were you ever considered for military duty in Nam?**

Moriarty: Yes, but my father, a Detroit surgeon, convinced the "authorities" that 10 electroshock treatments thrown on me in England made me unfit for duty. He threatened to sue them if anything happened to me in boot camp, let alone Vietnam. They dropped me into a category just this side of 4F.

**SC: Arthur Kennedy played your father. Did you enjoy working with this five-time Academy Award nominee?**

Moriarty: Kennedy was a classic alcoholic. It was a sad experience working with him. At the time, I was terrified of alcohol, so I stayed away from the drinking gang. I was kind of isolated, which suited the role, because my character didn't feel a part of anything anyway. He came back from Vietnam, utterly disillusioned with everything and everyone. But Kennedy was "one of the boys". Either you were a drinker, or you weren't in the club.

**SC: I SPY co-stars Robert Culp and Bill Cosby reunited for HICKEY AND BOGGS (1972), an excellent and underrated crime drama, in which you appear as a character named Ballard. Was this a substantial role?**

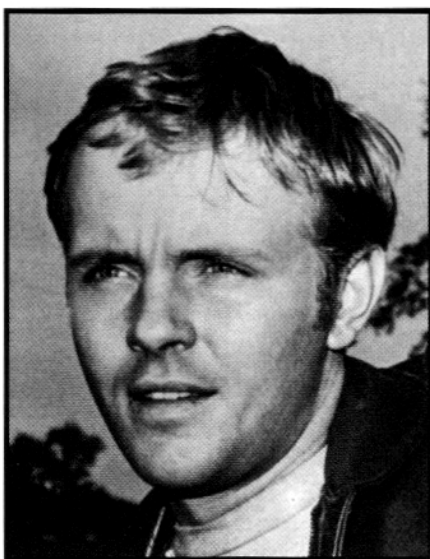
Moriarty: No. It was what I would now call a 'shameo', neither a supporting role nor a cameo. I played a hitman in a helicopter. All I remember of the filming was Bill Cosby's immense, Pied Piper charm and ability with kids of all ages. My helicopter entrance was unforgettable. We sat hovering off Leo Carrillo Beach, waiting for our cue. Down on the sundeck of a beachhouse were two nude ladies who simply stood up and waved to the pilot and myself. Needless to say, we were late for our cue. When I did arrive, hanging out of the 'copter in lengthy seat belts, my face was pale as the Pacific Coast sand from the sudden, 180-degree turn the pilot did to get us to the dunes on time.

**SC: You play a stern marine duty officer to perfection in THE LAST DETAIL. Any comments on working with Jack Nicholson when he was at the peak of his popularity?**

Moriarty: Didn't want to do the role but had to, because my son was on the way into the world and I needed SAG medical insurance to cover his delivery. The \$5,000 fee covered the minimum required for my union to provide 80% coverage. I was so disgusted with having to do this character that I had a mini-nervous breakdown in the first take. Jack Nicholson instantly caught the trouble but his only comment was: "Like the sweat, kid."

We broke for lunch. He took me out for pizza, relaxed me and I went back and did the deed. Jack Nicholson's a great professional. He thinks of the film first, his role second. It came off well enough, I guess. I still hate seeing the scene.

**SC: By the mid-seventies, you're considered one of the finest actors of your generation. Superstar-dom beckons. And then something goes terribly wrong on the police corruption drama REPORT TO THE COMMISSIONER. As**



**a rookie cop who guns down an undercover policewoman, you drew some of the most scathing notices of your career. What happened and how did things change for you after the REPORT debacle?**

Moriarty: Attempting a role because you identified with a character's inner nightmare but, for which, under the Hollywood rules, you were too old and too unattractive and unsexy, is a fairly good explanation for my personal failure in it. Being hailed in Manhattan as the "new Brando" was no help either. It simply made the critics sharpen their knives, Pauline Kael in particular.

**SC: In 1978, you starred in the great contemporary action film WHO'LL STOP THE RAIN, in which you are superb as Nick Nolte's disillusioned army buddy, who convinces him to smuggle heroin in from Vietnam. WHO'LL STOP THE RAIN came under fire for its amorality and scenes of heavy drug use. Any comments?**

Moriarty: My only complaint was that the script was nowhere near the heart or greatness of the novel, *Dog Soldiers*, by Robert Stone. My role — a Catholic soul trapped within an inner, Dante-esque hell — was particularly short-changed. The studio saw its saleability only in Nick Nolte's action hero. It was doomed to box-office failure not because of the screenplay, but because the United States was still not ready to look back on the sins of Vietnam.

**SC: Karel Reisz was perhaps a shade too genteel to direct such a tough-minded crime drama. Do you agree?**

Moriarty: Yes. Looking back, I wish he'd cast, for my role, Tommy Lee Jones, who was the other of Karel Reisz's two top choices. He and Nick Nolte would have gotten along much better together. Perhaps my lack of "manly" charisma when compared to Tommy Lee Jones was the deciding factor. Few in the audience would ask: "Why would Tuesday Weld cheat on Michael Moriarty?" According to LAW AND ORDER

producer Dick Wolf, I'm not even as sexy as Sam Waterston!

**SC: In 1979, you met up with William Peter Blatty, author of THE EXORCIST. He brought you to Germany and then to Hungary to film THE NINTH CONFIGURATION, a 'metaphysical black comedy' set in a chateau serving as a military psychiatric hospital. However, you are not in the finished film. What happened?**

Moriarty: At the studio in Budapest, a first reading of the script with the entire cast was completed. Based on this reading, it was Blatty's decision that I was "miscalculated" in the role and so Scott Wilson replaced me. As one of the cast members told me in the Budapest Hilton café: "We think you're the luckiest guy in the cast to be getting well away from this film and out of Hungary."

At a later meeting, Robert Loggia, who also appeared in the film, said to me: "How could Blatty make that decision from a script reading?" I replied: "He wanted me off-book and giving a fully complete performance. That's not fair to the rest of the cast. That's how you kill an ensemble. A cast grows together. It shouldn't be 'hurry and catch up.'"

I still give Blatty the benefit of the doubt, since this was the first film he had ever directed. Not long after I left the set, Nicol Williamson's fiery temper led him into an altercation in Budapest for which he was arrested and eventually deported back to England. Stacy Keach replaced him in the film's leading role.

**SC: In 1981, you co-starred with Dennis Hopper in REBORN, filmed in Italy and helmed by Spanish director J.J. Bigas Luna. How did you wind up in this obscure Spanish/Italian co-production?**

Moriarty: Your guess is as good as mine. There is a fantasy element to REBORN. It's a political satire about the reemergence of the Holy Family. Antonella Murgia is Mother Mary. I'm John, but I'm also the one who impregnates her. That's why there's that hilarious scene where I get inside her and I can't get out! I've got to impregnate her, for the sake of the Holy Family. There's no room at the inn, so we go to a gas station where she has the baby.

**SC: Hopper played a greedy TV preacher who exploits the woman who bears the stigmata (or wounds of Christ). What was Hopper like when you worked with him?**

Moriarty: He was suitably crazy, everything you expected him to be in those days. I won't dwell on the details. REBORN was made at the height of his wilder period. He was packing everything then. Lines were meaningless to him. Hopper was one of those 'spontaneous' actors. He picked up all of Brando's bad habits. But that's what Luna wanted — the crazier, the better!

I saw REBORN and liked it. I gave a good performance as an alcoholic con man who sets up all the fake miracles in Hopper's church, trains the actors to react properly when Hopper lays his hands on them. So we're running this scam down in Texas when Hopper hears about the real thing over in Italy. I go over there to find the lady who performs miracles and bring her back.

**SC: There are many who think that your portrayal of lowlife Jimmy Quinn in Q: THE WINGED SERPENT is your greatest performance, worthy of an Academy Award. Where did you draw your inspiration for this dead-on portrayal of a jittery, sniveling con man?**

Moriarty: Without consciously knowing it, I put together Huntz Hall from The Bowery Boys and Frank Sinatra in THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN ARM. It



Moriarty struggles with Yaphet Kotto and Hector Elizondo in REPORT TO THE COMMISSIONER



worked for me and everyone else, apparently. It was also one of the best times I'd ever had in filming. Larry Cohen makes everything funny. David Carradine and Richard Roundtree were great to work with. I don't think I ever had so much fun making a picture. That's why I'd like to work with Larry Cohen again.

**SC: Is a sequel to Q contemplated?**

Moriarty: Contemplated, but impossible, because the rights are tied up in the hands of people Larry can't even find.

**SC: In the early 80s, you start turning up in more horror movies. Was this a conscious decision?**

Moriarty: Yes. After HOLOCAUST, the A-line film industry wanted to cast me only as a villain. Sidney Lumet offered me the James Mason role in THE VERDICT. I said no repeatedly to such offers, turning to B films to play characters and leading men. This strategy led to PALE RIDER and ultimately, Ben Stone in LAW AND ORDER, so there was some method to my madness.

**SC: How did you find out that you were Stephen King's first choice to play hotel caretaker Jack Torrance in THE SHINING?**

Moriarty: That was just a rumor. Supposedly, King wanted me, but I wasn't bankable. But I'm glad I didn't do THE SHINING. I didn't want to play that generation's version of Hannibal Lecter. Not even the greatest actor in the world, Sir Anthony Hopkins, can live down that nightmare role. I'm lucky to be saddled with Ben Stone as my albatross.

**SC: You really have an aversion to playing villains.**

Moriarty: That's because I played the biggest villain of them all — Erik Dorf in HOLOCAUST! That's your normal, everyday German yuppie who turns into a monster. He's Mr. Everyman and we watch him become corrupted. It's frightening. After HOLOCAUST, I risked being typecast like that great actor, James Mason. Hollywood always put him in bad, decadent or crazy man roles. Same thing happened to J.T. Walsh. He was a wonderful artist and all they ever let him play were crazies and loathsome villains. It killed Walsh creatively and then he had a fatal heart attack.

**SC: BLOOD LINK (1982) is about a man tracking down his homicidal twin brother in Hamburg. Critics say it is a far more effective film than David Cronenberg's similar, overpraised DEAD RINGERS, with Jeremy Irons. Any comments?**

Moriarty: I was the first to be offered the Jeremy Irons role in DEAD RINGERS. I'd already done the twin thing in BLOOD LINK, so I said no. The good guy was hard to play and that's why BLOOD LINK doesn't work. He should have been more mischievous, instead of a Boy Scout. The bad guy was much more interesting. I didn't mind playing a villain in BLOOD LINK, because it was a plot necessity. Still, I got to spend two weeks in Berlin just before the Wall came down. The other scenes were shot in Italy.

**SC: Did you have any scenes with Cameron Mitchell?**

Moriarty: Yeah, I beat his brains out in one scene and drive him to a heart attack. I loved Cameron. He was old school, a real hoot. Oh, we had fun together! Much wine and many laughs.

**SC: You played homesteader Hull Barret opposite Clint Eastwood (as The Preacher) in the western**

**ghost story PALE RIDER (1985), a supernatural remake of Shane, which he also directed. Is director Clint good with actors?**

Moriarty: He's wonderful with actors, particularly television actors like myself. He'd been one himself, remember? He shoots fast. I like that. Hull Barret was like Van Heflin's character in Shane — a bit slow, earnest but without question a good man, with the courage of a lion.

**SC: You seemed to be enjoying yourself playing the breezy industrial spy David 'Mo' Rutherford in Larry Cohen's THE STUFF (1985), another wonderful performance. Of the four films you made with Cohen, I found this horror/satire to be the most disappointing. It seemed rather slapdash and neither scary nor amusing. What are your thoughts on THE STUFF?**

Moriarty: Larry was always slapdash, but he was having such a good time making THE STUFF that I couldn't. I got a little impatient, but Larry would coax another scene out of me by doing his imitation of Ed Wynn. (laughter) THE STUFF could be an allegory of the spread of AIDS in North America. You don't eat the food. The food eats you.



Michael Moriarty with Nick Nolte in WHO'LL STOP THE RAIN

**SC: Oddly enough, in TROLL, a 1986 fantasy-horror film, your character is named Harry Potter, Sr. Moriarty: I don't know if J.K. Rowling ever saw TROLL, but I wouldn't be surprised if she did. I play the father of this kid who discovers a real live troll. It was a family picture, shot in Barcelona. That place keeps calling me back! It's a very sophisticated city, filled with artists, sort of like Paris in the thirties.**

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**SC: Were you still acting on Broadway during the mid-eighties?**

Moriarty: Yes. Circle in the Square revived THE CAINE MUTINY COURT MARTIAL. I played both Queeg and the defense lawyer, Lt. Barney Greenwald. It was the first experience of repertoire acting I'd had since my four years at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis in the sixties.

**SC: In the late eighties, you guest starred in two episodes of THE EQUALIZER, a great series about an ex-spy who freelances as a quasi-vigilante. You played a homeless 'extraterrestrial' in "Starfire" (1989) and a Russian defector in "Encounter in a Closed Room" (1987). Was there something about this show and/or its star Edward Woodward that appealed to you?**

Moriarty: Yes, the writing, particularly in the "Starfire" episode, and the Casablanca spin within "Encounter."

Woodward is a wonderful actor, but a lesson in why not to take the only leading role in a television series. It drove him to a heart attack in mid-series.

**SC: In 1987, you co-starred with Karen Black in Larry Cohen's IT'S ALIVE III: ISLAND OF THE ALIVE (1987), about mutant babies.**

Moriarty: What I love most about Larry's work is his love of the "misfits" in life, especially as shown in Q and IT'S ALIVE III, and his subconscious awareness of something awful about to happen to the human race, as brilliantly satirized in THE STUFF and RETURN TO SALEM'S LOT.

**SC: In THE DARK TOWER (1987), a horror confection about a haunted skyscraper — filmed in Barcelona subbing for NYC — you play a detective investigating a series of grisly murders in the building.**

Moriarty: THE DARK TOWER was supposed to have been directed by Freddie Francis — the cinematographer who shot it — but he wanted Alan Smithee's name to go on it. Everybody disowned the film.

**SC: In A RETURN TO SALEM'S LOT (1987), you are**

**an anthropologist who moves to a New England town inhabited by vampires. You said in the Larry Cohen book (Larry Cohen: The Radical Allegories of an Independent Filmmaker by Tony Williams) that it was frustrating to work with legendary director Samuel Fuller, who wasn't a trained actor but had a colorful role as an elderly vampire hunter.**

Moriarty: Sam was both infuriating and heartwarming. He was totally undisciplined. Sam wasn't an actor. He remembered lines when he felt like it, which was usually on his close-up. (laughter) Sam made things twice as difficult, but he stole the film. I was climbing the walls, but I never complained. I just got out of the way and let him have the scene. You don't fight someone who's been given a long leash to do whatever he wants to do. I didn't want to compete with him. I just went in, did the scene and got out.

**SC: Concerning THE HANOI**

**HILTON (1987), in which you play a POW, the Washington Post film critic wrote: "Director Lionel Chetwynd has achieved the impossible — making a Vietnam prison torture movie dull. And although his sympathy for Americans missing in action seems genuine and laudable, the film liberal-bashes so heavily-handedly it's enough to make Nixon cry 'Fonda.'" Agree/disagree?**

Moriarty: No. Jane cried "uncle" on the Barbara Walters interview show. She finally apologized for calling the POWs liars. The Washington Post critic, a hard-core liberal himself, found the best way to deal with it: a patronizing dismissal. Stanley Kaufman, a downright Red, called it "more dangerous than Rambo." Larry King — a former fair-weather friend of mine — or his producers, I'm not sure which, wouldn't let me on his talk show to promote it.

**SC: In 1990, you play the hero in an action adventure feature produced by B-movie king Roger Corman — FULL FATHOM FIVE, described as a poor man's HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER. Leonard Maltin says it's "a waterlogged mess, far too cheap for its ambitions: a group of renegades seize a Russian sub and threaten the nuclear annihilation of Houston, while the U. S. is preparing to invade Panama." Was FULL FATHOM FIVE really as bad as all that?**



Moriarty: Yes. We shot that in Peru. The less said the better. Why did I agree to make the picture? Good guy role in B film.

**SC:** In 1996, you returned to the United States for a memorable supporting role as a politically-motivated general in the first Hollywood film about the Gulf War — *COURAGE UNDER FIRE*. What drew you to this project?

Moriarty: Ed Zwick, against the advice of his studio producers, wanted me to do it. I was willing to take a much shorter, good guy role the studio had offered me but Zwick held firm. I wasn't all that happy about playing one of Denzel's antagonists because it would just mean more offers of quasi-fascist generals, which it did, but, as my grandmother advised me: "Do the best you can and then don't give a damn."



Above: Moriarty in *HOLOCAUST*  
Right: Wyatt Page and Moriarty in  
*HITLER MEETS CHRIST*

**SC:** Along with Ben Stone, your portrayal of Gordon Tallas, a cop investigating a *MAJOR CRIME* (1997) is one of the peaks of your career. This is surprisingly tough fare for a made-for-TV offering. There was talk of *MAJOR CRIME* becoming a regular series, but this came to naught. What happened?

Moriarty: My name, I think. The blacklist was and, in many ways, is still on within the American networks. Lately, only CBS has shown an interest in my future. DNA (a true crime show I may narrate), *THE DEAD ZONE* (a new TV series) and *TALKING TO HEAVEN* (a TV-movie about psychic James Van Praagh, starring Ted Danson) are all connected to CBS, as is *ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT*, which profiled me recently.

**SC:** Tell me more about this blacklist.

Moriarty: There are some leftist firebrands who'd love to see me stop working. In the fall of 2000, Rip Torn — who is very active in the Screen Actors Guild — came up to me in a Vancouver bar and started strangling me! I hadn't said a word to him. Torn just walked in, put his hands around my throat and choked me. He was so drunk, he had no strength. My recent L.A. *TIMES* editorial (entitled "The Two-Pronged Leftist Assault on Hollywood") might have driven him over the edge. Oh well, most Method actors express more torment than talent.

**SC:** Was Michael Kelly — the shadowy intelligence operative you portrayed so effectively on *PSI FACTOR: CHRONICLES OF THE PARANORMAL* — based on you? Why was Kelly written out of the series in 1998?

Moriarty: The producers came to me and I outlined a role for them. They bought it to get me into the series and then screwed around with it. Again the efforts to spin me into a villain. It became insidious the way the writers would try to compromise a role I had created. I gave up fighting them and quit the series.

**SC:** In 1999, you appeared as the sinister Dr. Draco in "The Eyes of Lazarus", an episode of *THE SECRET ADVENTURES OF JULES VERNE* TV series, a Canada/UK co-production filmed in Montreal. Any observations on *JULES VERNE*?

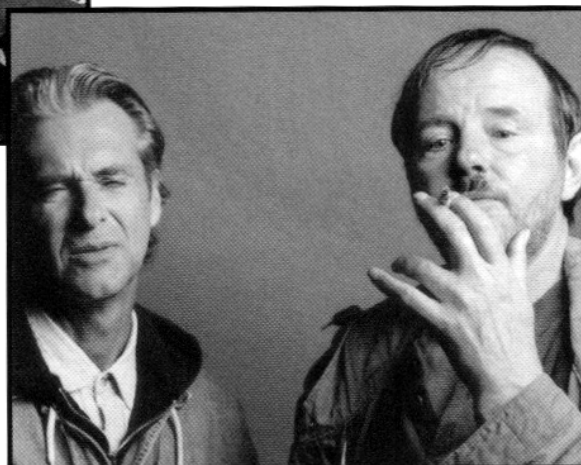
Moriarty: I played a kind of scientific exorcist who drives the Devil out of people. The Devil inhabits three people, moving from one to another. Finally, I capture the Devil in my machine, which X-rays souls. We take a photo of the demon. They pull out the X-ray and guess what it looks like — Christ's face on the Shroud of Turin!

**SC:** In 1999, you starred in *WOMAN WANTED*, directed by actor Kiefer Sutherland. This engaging story of a widower and his son competing for the love of their sexy housekeeper was meant for theatrical release, but ended up on cable TV instead.

Moriarty: To my mind, the role of the professor is my best performance in a feature film to date.

**SC:** You went to LA in 2000 to play James Dean's father in Mark Rydell's biopic. In a recent interview, you claimed that James Dean is highly politicized. Could you elaborate?

Moriarty: The Group Theater was a Marxist, agit-prop "family" of sorts that spawned a "Method" of



acting that did more than teach America how to make the pauses more important than the dialogue. It was and, in the present day, Actor's Studio, still is a major political influence among young, ambitious actors, writers and directors. The Dean film itself is a white-wash and self-declared homage to the glory days of the Studio, an apparently crafty infomercial. My dismay is at the utter arrogance with which the director, producers and Turner Network declare James Dean's mother an adulteress and his father a bitter old cuckold and the sole person responsible for Dean's neurotic, troubled life, and do so without just cause or evidence. The self-indulgence within the Studio tradition is portrayed as having nothing to do with Dean's "eccentricities."

**SC:** In 2000, you joined a stellar cast in "Final Appeal", a two-part episode of *THE OUTER LIM-*

*ITS*, in which you played a Solicitor General at the most important trial in history. Your co-stars were Charlton Heston, Kelly McGillis, Robert Loggia, Amanda Plummer and Cicely Tyson. With all that acting talent, was it a highly-charged competitive atmosphere on the set?

Moriarty: It was all cast at the last minute. Cue cards were all over the set. I, unfortunately, am unable to perform as an actor without knowing my lines. Aside from the last minute cramming I had to do, I had a great time hanging around with so many "veterans."

**SC:** You mostly work in Canada these days. In your opinion, how do working conditions on Canadian productions differ from those in the United States?

Moriarty: Far more pleasant and rewarding to work with a Canadian crew. They're younger, just as equipped, less cynical and more fun.

**SC:** In the crime thriller *COLD BLOODED* (2001), you are cast as Mark Solomon, a savvy Crown prosecuting attorney. You described Solomon as "Ben Stone without the naiveté". Do you really feel that Stone was naive?

Moriarty: Yes. And so was I. The linkage between mainstream entertainment and government control over that became clear to me in 1994. When I met Janet Reno, the scales came off my eyes and those of Ben Stone as well.

**SC:** What can you tell us about your new series *THE DEAD ZONE*, in which you have a recurring role as the evil clergyman Rev. Gene Purdy?

Moriarty: We've only filmed one complete episode and half the second episode. I have no idea if the thing is even gonna go, or when we resume production. We have 90 minutes in the can, but this couldn't even be released as a stand alone TV-movie.

The script is just ridiculous, a cartoon. It's a trite left-wing attempt at re-demonizing evangelists. (Producer/writer) Michael Piller made it very clear that he bought the rights to *THE DEAD ZONE* so he could do anything he wanted with the characters (from the Stephen King novel). Piller doesn't have to answer to King. He paid him enough money so he wouldn't have to. So liberties are taken with the story. There is no Rev. Gene Purdy character in the novel. Piller made him up so he could beat up on Christianity. I mean, give me a break! There are inferences that maybe Purdy murdered Johnny's mother to get her money, which he used to build his little holy kingdom.

There's an element of *THE FUGITIVE* in *THE DEAD ZONE* as well. Psychic Johnny Smith, played by Anthony Michael Hall, is suspected of being a serial killer and he's on the run, trying to find the real killer and clear his name. Everyone is a suspect and I have no idea who the killer is...Instead of making Purdy a southerner, I decided to make him a mid-Atlantic, Church of England, Puritan sort of evangelist. He doesn't wear a collar, dresses well in Italian suits. He's gotta look good and be sexy. Purdy dresses like the Godfather, know what I mean? If we resume production, I'm thinking of modeling Purdy after Bill Clinton, with his messianic smile.

**SC:** You just finished playing the ghost of William Randolph Hearst in an episode of *MENTORS*. Kids evoke the spirit of Hearst using a 'hologram machine.'

Moriarty: They wanted me to play Orson Welles. I didn't want to do that, so I played Hearst as a cross between me and Sir Ralph Richardson — a dizzy, batty, otherworldly space cadet. And it worked. I'm eccentric enough to keep kids interested, and maybe even funny enough to make 'em laugh. I had a wonderful time. What a great crew! Aces up on *MENTORS* all the way.

/ CONTINUED ON PAGE 11



# Before there was SHOCK CINEMA ...There was SLIMETIME!

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by Steven Puchalski

with Tavis Riker, Brian J. Edwards and Steven Shapiro

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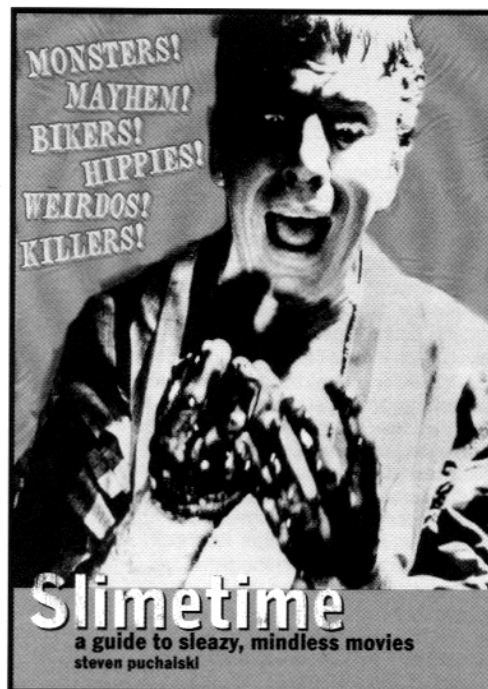
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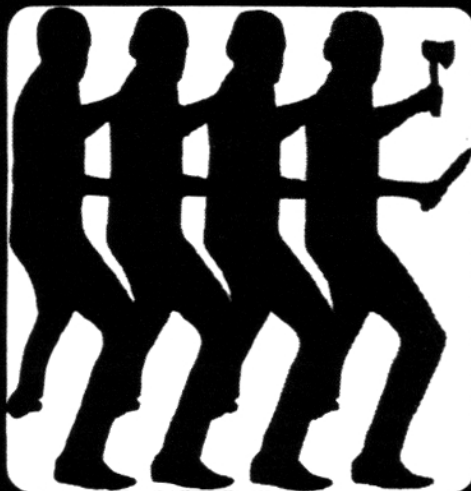
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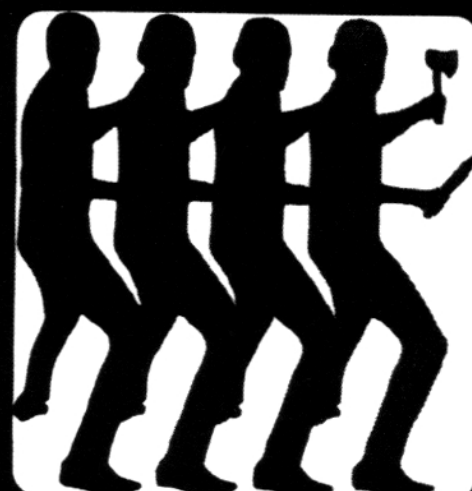
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# KING DAVID: An Interview With Actor KEITH DAVID

By JEREMIAH KIPP

Finding the common humanity within his characters, no matter how broadly comical (*THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY*) or dangerous (*REQUIEM FOR A DREAM*), Keith David has sustained his presence as one of our most versatile character actors. He remains best known to genre audiences for his screen debut as the temperamental mechanic, Childs, in John Carpenter's horror classic *THE THING*. After their apocalyptic face-off against an alien creature that can imitate any life form, David and Kurt Russell share a haunting moment together as two survivors passing a bottle of J&B, wondering if the other is still human.

Four years later, David went on to deliver another formidable performance as a hardened American G.I. counting down his final days and teaching Charlie Sheen how to endure Vietnam in Oliver Stone's *PLATOON*. Having appeared in at least one film a year since, his chameleonic gallery of roles include one-legged heist ringleader Kirby in *DEAD PRESIDENTS*; Jackie Robinson in *BLUE IN THE FACE*; and a steel-nerved gunslinger in Sam Raimi's *THE QUICK AND THE DEAD*.

Onstage, David earned a 1991 Tony nomination for *JELLY'S LAST JAM* on Broadway, and was cited for his moving portrayal of a flashy, self-conflicted blues guitarist in August Wilson's *SEVEN GUITARS*. He brought his resonant, authoritative voice to such TV-cartoons as *GARGOYLES*, *HERCULES*, and *SPAWN*, as well as animated features such as *PRINCESS MONONOKE* and *FINAL FANTASY: THE SPIRITS WITHIN*.

It was a privilege for *SHOCK CINEMA* to spend an afternoon with Keith David at a coffee shop in New York. We caught up with him right after he finished his run in *OTHELLO* at the Public Theater. Impassioned about his work, sincere in his demeanor, David proved to be as buoyant and charismatic as his screen roles suggest.

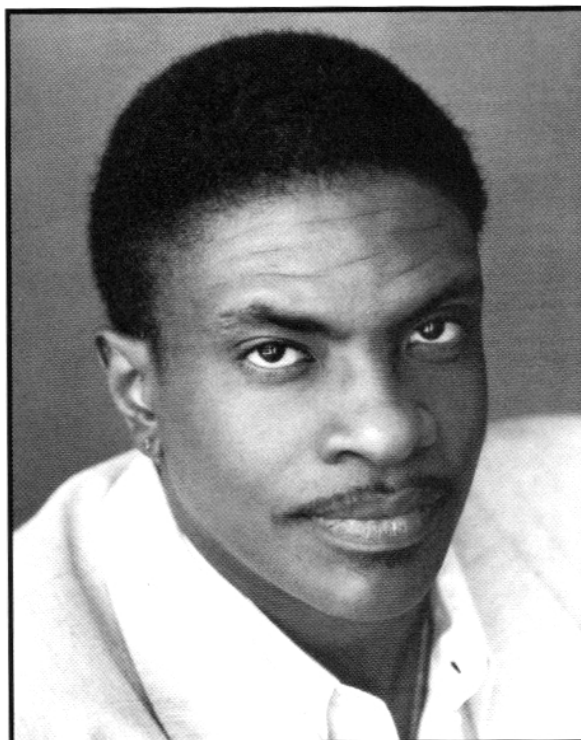
**SHOCK CINEMA:** One of the very first roles you played as a kid was the Cowardly Lion in *THE WIZARD OF OZ*. How old were you?

Keith David: I was nine years old, in fourth or fifth grade. That was my first big production. My little brother was in the audience and said, "Ma, that's Keith up there!" Now, I wanted to be an actor when I was two years old, but certainly in doing that play, I knew this was what I wanted to do my whole life. I always loved old movies and watching actors, so when I saw *LEAVE IT TO BEAVER* and those kid stars, I told myself, "I could do that!" I wanted to be the cowboy, the Indian, the king, the horseman — I knew I could play any of those parts, and still today I don't think there's anything I could not play. That's the way it was then, and that's the way it is now. I realize there are certain roles I'm too old for, just as I know there are roles better suited to me because of my temperament. As an artist, though, I feel my imagination has no bars. Though my scope is wide, it's not infinite — but I'm not going to accept that finality without some challenge.

**SC:** You studied at The High School of the Performing Arts and Julliard. What can you tell me about those years?

David: It was great training, man. In high school, I played Peter Zenger. He was the man that set a

responsible freedom of the press, fighting for the right to speak your mind through the press and in public speaking. To be able to say what you feel for or against something. He was arrested and punished for it [in 1735]. Don't speak against the king, don't speak against the government. In retrospect, that was my training ground because not only was he a character, but a political character with a political sensibility. He had something to say that didn't exactly get the popular vote. As Malcolm X said, if you don't stand for something you'll fall for anything. Zenger stood for something. He stood for the ideals of the constitution.



This was a man who wasn't about duplicity, but unfortunately duplicity and expediency is the ordinary way of life that most of us live.

Playing those kinds of men informed my humanity and my integrity. It feeds my spirit as I take away something from each character, even when I play a guy who is despicable. It feeds me so I don't have to act out that despicability with my friends or my wife or my children, because I played it onstage. It's not therapeutic — but it's cathartic in the sense that I got to exorcise that part of myself elsewhere, so I don't have to live it. That's what I'm drawn to. I used to want to be a minister, but now I feel that acting is my ministry. Instead of standing in the pulpit, I communicate through my portrayals of different characters. That's done in the best spirit of the Dionysian pageants, which were spiritual in nature and sacred. God speaks to me, through me to you. The theater is a place where we get to examine what it means to be a human being. We need to see that. Hear that. It reverberates from artists to audience, and can be just as profound for the actor. Sometimes a role can change your life. There are times when it has a resonance that allows you to

move through your life differently than before you came to the theater.

**SC:** You played *Othello* here at the Public Theater recently (opposite Liev Schreiber's *Iago*). This wasn't your first time doing the play, though — you had understudied for Raul Julia once before, right?

David: Yes, 23 years ago when Raul played *Othello* opposite Richard Dreyfuss. Before that, right when I was about to graduate college, I played the title role. *OTHELLO* was my last big project there, and I had just finished playing it when I got accepted as understudy to Raul Julia. I never got to play *Othello* in place of Raul. It was a limited run, and as is tradition for Shakespeare festivals we only ran about six weeks. The understudy goes on only in extreme emergencies, unlike in an unlimited run like you might do on Broadway.

**SC:** As you get older, the part of *Othello* doesn't change. But you have.

David: I think that I'm an old spirit. I'm an old soul. I've been there several times, and have always been the group old man. I'd often play the fathers, those types of roles. In the tradition of the theater, the old men were played by young guys. That was great training. When I first played *Othello*, I was 22 years old. This time, at the Public, I didn't have to put gray in my hair or lines on my face. And *OTHELLO* has to do with a man in his prime, or middle years as we label it, being in love for the first time. In college, I had to use a lot more of my creative imagination than my actual life experience. Now, I've lived through some of that, and there's the difference.

Whether or not one cared for my performance or not — everyone has their opinion — I played him as I believed him. I'm glad I had the chance to play *Othello* in a way that was intimate and domestic. When I played him for the first time in college, I had a different director with a different approach to the work. It was large, like the Laurence Olivier version. A lot of people didn't like his portrayal, and he was over the top in a lot of ways, but what I appreciated was the scope of Olivier's performance. The largeness. My director said, "We mustn't bring these characters down to our little selves, we must bring our little selves to the height of these characters." That was amazing to me. Shakespeare talks about kings and dukes and these grand people, but one of the things I find significant is how he has us examine the parallels and the proximity of those people who we think are Up There. They're no different than you and me, they're just under different circumstances.

**SC:** Shakespeare likes to show multiple sides of those characters. *Othello* makes his eloquent speech, building a case for loving *Desdemona*, before the Duke of Venice and the politicians, but we also see him in more intimate one-on-one situations with *Desdemona* and *Iago*. There's the public figure and also the private man.

David: Right. With all of his flaws and insecurities. They're doing *THE CRUCIBLE* on Broadway now. The Preacher, he's a man. We tend to pedestalize the people in those positions, endowing them with superhu-

man qualities and an otherness. Like Mohammad and Jesus Christ and Moses. These were human beings of extraordinary character, but in examining their lives, you find they all had idiosyncrasies and humanity that make them like us. They were extraordinary, but they walked the earth as we do. They had the distractions and impatience that attract us, and those we fall pray to. Shakespeare makes us see that they're just men, with all those same qualities — even though they may not be indulged like us ordinary folk, largely because of their positions. Sometimes they have to be more disciplined. At best, they are. At worst, they hide it.

**SC: Let's talk about your movies. One of your first was John Carpenter's *THE THING*.**

David: That was my first.

**SC: When did you find out you were cast?**

David: I had just come from the American Theater Festival in Stratford, Connecticut, which is their Shakespeare theater. I had been performing and had reached the end of my tour with that company in 1980. I had saved a little money after four months on the road and was about to take my speech teacher training in Milwaukee, which cost me about \$1,000 (which was all I'd saved). I had auditioned for *THE THING* in April and hadn't heard anything by the end of May. Someone had offered me another [non-film related] job, which would happen in September. One night while we were waiting to hear, I was at Phebe's Bar with the woman I lived with at the time. She fancied herself as having a great sense of humor, and told me, "Well, honey, I hate to tell you, but I don't think you'll be able to take that job in September." I asked, "Oh God, why?" And she told me, "Because you've got the movie." I was like, what? I had auditioned a month before and thought for sure it was gone. So I got *THE THING*! I was almost angry with her for pulling that shit on me, but what a gift! I was like Richard Pryor. I was so happy: "Buy everybody at the bar a drink! ONE drink for everybody!" (laughs) I was ecstatic.

Just to fill in some more story, I had taken my speech teacher training course that summer. I had to leave New York on June 20, which was the last time I saw my great-grandmother. On that day, I sang for her, honoring her as a trusted elder of the church. She had taken me to California when I was three years old, to visit my uncle. I had promised her that after I got this movie and started getting paid, I would bring her to California as she did for me when I was a child. She was my patron saint, and she loved me. So I went to Milwaukee and graduated from the Edith Skinner Institute — we had a month of in-class training and a month with Edith sitting in the back of the class, evaluating us as we taught. Edith died right after she finished her teaching, the week we started that in-class training. My great-grandmother died within the first two weeks I was in California shooting *THE THING*.

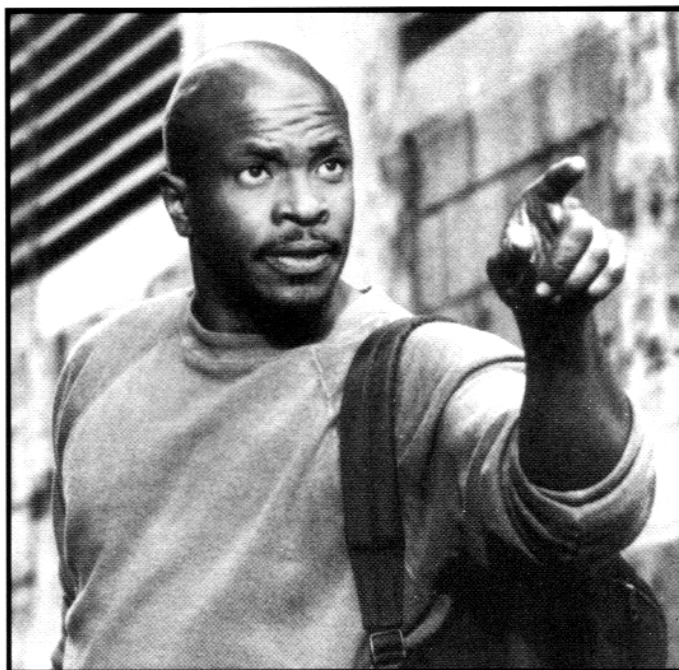
Now, on September 16, I had a car accident. I am sure it is because of the grace of God and these two ladies, Edith and my great-grandmother, that I am alive today. I smashed into the center divider between the two sides of the highway, and if that wall hadn't been there I would have killed myself and several other people. I know those two ladies were watching over me that day, and even now.

**SC: There's a scene in *THE THING* where Blair (Wilford Brimley) is smashing up the radio room. You run down the hallway and tell Kurt Russell, "He's smashed up the chopper, and killed most of the dogs." On the DVD commentary, Russell points out that you're hiding your left hand behind**

**him because it was injured in the car accident. You have scenes, though, where you have to pick up an axe and hack through a door.**

David: (laughs) That was toward the end of the shoot when my hand was getting better.

So, yes, I hurt my hand, and on my first day I was shooting I tried to hide it. But that's difficult to do when it's swollen up like a boxing glove! John Carpenter and the producers walked towards me, and I could see their faces change when they saw my hand. It was like, "Oh hi, Keith, how ya doing — WHAT THE —?" I had to tell them what happened, and they immediately sent me to the hospital. After the operation, it looked okay — but we had to start shooting and I had this hand all stitched up with two broken bones. For most of the shoot, because my hand was so swollen, I had to wear a surgical glove over my hand. Hollywood Jim, the set painter, found the right color to match my skin. He painted the surgical glove over my hand, and if you ever notice you'll never see me gesture in *THE THING* with more than my right hand. My left is always hidden, under the table. You'll never see my left hand.



Keith David in John Carpenter's *THEY LIVE*

**SC: Did you have a sense of unity with your co-stars?**

David: I had the best time in my life, man. We had a great time. Great guys! I'll tell you a story: The year before, I had graduated from Julliard, where I had all my classical training. This same summer, as I said, I had taken my training as a classical speech teacher. Now, as Childs in *THE THING*, I had lines like, "How does this motherfucker wake up after thousands of years in the ice?" And I was so afraid that my training would leave me that I would say the lines like, (carefully enunciated), "How Does This Mother-Fucker... Wake Up... Ahhhhhfer Thousands of Yeeeeeeaaaars In the Ice?"

We rehearsed for two weeks on the sound stage and, of course, a lot of the actors, Will Brimley being one of the worst culprits, would — well, I'm sitting across the table from him during our first read through and he's speaking so softly, going, "Murmur murmur murmur that's not dog murmur murmur murmur." And I cannot understand what he is saying! I'm like, "Huh?" And I'm sitting there across the table not much bigger than the one we're at right now, and every now and then I pop in with a line like, "HELL NO!" and "WHAT?" and I'm resounding throughout the room.

At lunchtime, John Carpenter comes up to me and says, "You know, you don't have to project like

that." And I said, "Well, I just want to make sure my intention is clear." And he was like, "What does that mean?" He's not an actor, so he didn't know the vocabulary for actors at that time. But I appreciate him because certainly having gotten to do *THEY LIVE*, he had become an actor's director. He could really communicate with us. He worked very much with Roddy Piper to figure out his character.

**SC: The scene in *THEY LIVE* that everyone remembers is your long fight scene with Roddy Piper.**

David: That scene was fashioned after the scene in *THE QUIET MAN* between John Wayne and Victor McLaglen: "You think I'm gonna hit you, but I won't! I won't! The HELL I won't!" BAM! Then they fight all the way through the town. It was fashioned after that fight. We rehearsed for like two weeks and it took three days to shoot. It runs about seven minutes, and was great fun to do.

**SC: Could you describe working with Carpenter?**

David: John Carpenter. He's a great guy. I really loved the experience of working with him, both times. I respected him, and he was respectful of our space as actors. He's a very visual guy, and also very clear. There's no time wasted on his set. John cares about what he wants, he works with people he knows, and there's no bullshit, which is great. You don't have it that good on every film. I was sort of spoiled by that because now when I go on the set and I'm sitting around for hours, I get a little antsy about it. If you knew you didn't need me for another two hours, I could have been in my hotel room. I have a nice trailer and it's very comfortable, but I'm more comfortable in my bed. But John works on the clock, and I will always appreciate John Carpenter.

I didn't hear him raise his voice very often. There was just one time that I remember. [My co-stars] Charlie Hallahan, Richard Masur, and Kurt Russell, who was sometimes a script doctor — these three guys especially were sticklers for storyline and what made sense, since they had all read a lot of science fiction and were big science fiction buffs. As we were rehearsing, we'd wind up having these discussions: "Well, if the Thing does this, why does this or that happen?" There were a couple of discrepancies

with what the Thing does, and what the action was. One of the big topics was why the Thing kills people: it doesn't kill just to kill, only when it's threatened.

So there was a scene with Joel Polis, Tommy Waites and myself walking down the hall. We were shooting on the sound stage, all set up on the wireless mikes. There was some delay between the camera rolling and the bell going off, and the bell was our cue. So as we were waiting, the three of us got to talking: "I don't know why the fuck we're shooting this scene. It doesn't make sense to me! John's just gonna cut it out anyway, so it's kinda stupid! If we'd decided the Thing is not gonna do this, why are we walking along here discovering that the Thing is being killed like this?" On and on. It was a conversation we would have had in front of John, though we weren't. But it sounded like we were talking about him behind his back. John overheard us on the mikes, so he came around the corner shouting, "We're shooting the fucking scene because I wanna shoot the scene, goddamn it!" You wanna talk about shitting a brick, that was it. Boy, he cut us a new asshole that day. But that's the only time in the two pictures we've done together that I've ever heard him raise his voice.

**SC: What was it like after the release of *THE THING*?**



David: After *THE THING*, I thought, "Well, I didn't get bad reviews." I knew it was a good movie. It's my belief that it didn't come out at the right time. It came out in July, and for me it was an October movie. I think Universal thought it would be a big summer money maker, but it was totally overshadowed by *E.T.* *POLTERGEIST* also came out, which I didn't think was a great movie. It was ok, though *THE THING* is far better. But as far as genre is concerned, *E.T.* eclipsed everything. If Universal had waited a few months, it would have been a hit. *THE THING* has since become a great cult film and people love it, but I think it would have done a bit of business initially if they had waited.

In any case, I thought, "Hey, I'm gonna have a life in the movies!" But I didn't get another for four years after that. My next movie was *PLATOON*, which was a great coup — such a great opportunity. Since *PLATOON*, which was 1986, I've made at least one film a year. All my life I wanted to be in the theater and in the movies, and am terribly grateful to God that I make what I do, and that's all I do. I even had one time when my name was above the title, not a big movie, but it did play in theaters and on cable.

**SC: On *PLATOON*, did you work with Military Technical Advisor Dale Dye?**

David: No, but I have worked with him since. There was a film I did called *SEMPER PAR*, a pilot for NBC, for which he was one of the initiators. It didn't end up being a series, but did make for a decent two-hour film. Dale Dye helped me to understand the values of serving in the military. I always thought I didn't have the right attitude, but he helped me see the importance and value of their teamwork — what it was like to be a part of a well oiled machine, to carry your own weight. It wasn't about sublimation; it was about the oneness of the unit. I got a taste of that in college, working with ensembles, and I'm a good team player. Working on *PLATOON* truly enhanced that feeling for me.

**SC: How did you build your character, King, for *PLATOON*?**

David: I read *Bloods* [by Wallace Terry] and some other books about Vietnam. I spoke with vets. And we had two weeks straight before filming, which informed me a lot.

**SC: What did you do during those two weeks?**

David: We lived like a rifle platoon. Dug foxholes. It was great, because during those first two weeks and even for most of the shoot, we never called ourselves by our real names. We called ourselves by our character names, which was very interesting because there's no ego there. In the best sense of creating a character, you got to explore and associate with what it was like being those guys. And I have a lot of respect for King. I like him.

On one particular occasion, I was walking down the street and a guy walked up to me. He said, "Man, listen, I don't want to disturb you or anything, but I just want to tell you that I served in the 25th Infantry in 1968. And I know you." Then he walked away, and I wept. It just made me weep. More than one person has come up to me and said, "I know you. Your character. I know that guy." That was important to me, and that's what any actor would want. That you created life into that role, that you made him real. The fact that King was real for so many people was moving. That's what I was after, that was what I was hoping for, wishing for, praying for. It meant much more than just that thing we call acting.

**SC: When you did *OFF LIMITS*, that was with Gregory Hines. You**

**worked together again on the Broadway show, *JELLY'S LAST JAM*, in 1991.**

David: The production for *OFF LIMITS* spent weeks in Thailand, and I only spent 10 days. That's when I first met Gregory and his then wife, and that's when they first approached me. They said, "We have this project that we'd like you involved in." Gregory had already been associated with *JELLY'S LAST JAM*. He said that they had a character for me, and would like to work with me again. Gregory has since become a good friend, and one of the things I appreciate most about him is that through that entire experience, he has proven to be a man of his word. When *JELLY'S LAST JAM* came up, he mentioned my name to the producer, and sure enough I got the job.

We workshoped that play for three years, then he and I got to play on Broadway for a year. In my career, I have a few red letters. Playing in *JELLY'S LAST JAM* and *PLATOON* were two of those. It was one of the most wonderful experiences of my life, certainly the most fun I ever had onstage. I got to sing, dance, act. All that!

**SC: That was the first time I heard you sing. I didn't see the play, but I heard the recording a while ago.**

David: Yes, I am a singer. I sang before I acted. Now I have a little freedom to do my nightclub act. I'm a jazz singer.

**SC: You played a jazz saxophonist in Clint Eastwood's *BIRD*. Was there anything you did to prepare for that?**

David: My father was a great jazz musician, so I was familiar with a lot of the music and with *Bird*. Working with Clint Eastwood was another red letter. Man, what a guy. I count Lloyd Richards [director of August Wilson's *SEVEN GUITARS*], George Wolfe [director of *JELLY'S LAST JAM*] and Clint Eastwood as three directors that I worked with who exemplified the greatest collaboration between actor and director. The three

of them have a profound relationship and a respect for actors. That's because they know what it's like, which is beautiful to be around. Even when they didn't agree with my choices or wanted me to make different ones, they never cut me off at the knees — even when they thought my choices weren't the most appropriate. Instead of saying, "Make another choice!" they allowed me to let that choice run its course and then finally would say, "You're gonna do something else, right?" (laughs)



With Ben Stiller & Markie Post in *THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY*

**SC: But they didn't say no.**

David: That's right. They allowed me to discover for myself that maybe it wasn't the best choice. You certainly don't see that every day, Chauncey!

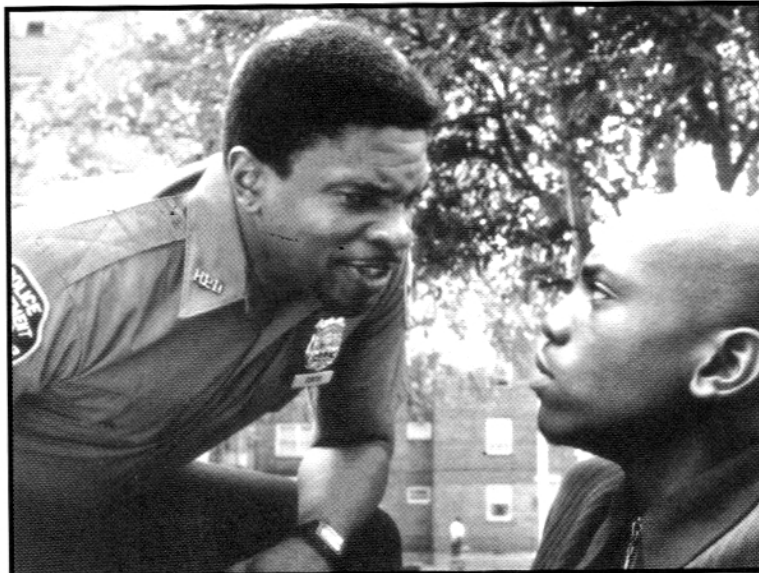
**SC: In the mid-to-late '90s you had a bunch of roles playing generals and authority figures in movies like *THE PUPPET MASTERS*, *VOLCANO*, *ARMAGEDDON*. But you also played a gay hairdresser in *LOOSE WOMEN* and Charlie Jensen, Mary's stepfather, in *THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY*.**

David: I love the comedies that I'm in. Most people think of me as a very serious actor, or a tragedian. I am, but I also think I'm a funny guy with a great sense of humor. But I don't get many chances to play that side of myself, especially in the movies. *MEN AT WORK* and *THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY* are two comedies that I've done which I feel good about. I'm not Eddie Murphy, Richard Pryor, or Dick Van Dyke, but I have my own sense of humor when given the opportunity. Those are two of the chances that I've had, and I'm greatly appreciative. The Farrelly Brothers, they're very clever guys. I never got into *DUMB & DUMBER*, but they do some funny stuff!

**SC: Is your approach to the comic roles any different?**

David: You don't go for the laughs. I do sometimes know that if I say a line this way, it's funnier than it is that way. But when I hear the great comedians talk about comedy, you have to take it very seriously. I was watching an episode of *INSIDE THE ACTOR'S STUDIO*, where Jack Lemmon was saying, "Comedy is a serious business." Slipping on a banana peel, falling down, and bumping your ass is not funny, but the manner in which you recover? That can be funny. When you watch Buster Keaton or Charlie Chaplin do it, it's funny. It's all in their reaction.

**SC: What are your memories of working on *ARMAGEDDON*?**



Keith David with Mekhi Phifer in Spike Lee's *CLOCKERS*

David: I met some wonderful people and got to hang out a little with Billy Bob Thornton. Now he is a funny guy. He tells a good story. I can't say that we're friends or that we hang out together outside of that experience. We don't go out and have a drink, but I don't feel that if I saw him we couldn't. When you work with people, you work with them. You might hang out and have dinner together during the thing, but unless you become close friends, it's business and life goes on. And he is a busy guy. He is a wonderful actor, but in my experience with him, he is also a wonderful man.

**SC: You acted for Spike Lee playing Housing Police Officer Andre the Giant in *CLOCKERS*.**

David: I've seen Spike around and always wanted to work with him. This was that opportunity. I'm glad of it, and would hope to work with him again. Unfortunately, most directors don't know their work from a hole in the ground. But once in a while you come across someone who knows what they're doing. It's a blessing to work with someone who knows what they want and are able to communicate that. A lot of directors can't. Spike is not one of those. He doesn't waste time, he doesn't talk about it too much, he says what the scene's about, then says, "Let's do it." He doesn't do a whole lot of takes, and basically just gets the job done. If you let him know what you're doing as an actor, he may say do a little more of this, a little more of that. He gets what he wants and moves on. If I wanted to try something else, I don't think he wouldn't allow me to do that.

I come to the table willing to experiment or explore, but also come with a clear idea. If that works, great. If you want to do something differently, sometimes it becomes so much more spectacular. But they have a vision and they know what they want to accomplish. In that same vein, I loved working with the Hughes Brothers on *DEAD PRESIDENTS*. They were very clear about what they wanted. I got a lot of mileage out of what they asked from me, even though it was different than the way I originally envisioned the character. They didn't betray me. They were very good, and I would love to work with them again, too.

**SC: One of the actors that *SHOCK CINEMA* interviewed was Victor Argo, who you worked with in *BLUE IN THE FACE*.**

David: Victor! Great guy! A wonderful actor. I love that guy. Again, he's one of the actors who comes to the table with something and will throw the ball back at you. I would love to work with him more directly, spending more time on something. He came to see my nightclub act, and I appreciate him as a human being. It's great when you can come across that. Victor and I go to places together and listen to music, or if we happen to be at the same bar or restaurant we hang out. Just from that one little experience. He is a great dude. I would work with him anytime.

**SC: In *PITCH BLACK* you played a holy man.**

David: I had to explore Islam for that role. As I said, at one point in my life I wanted to become a minister. When I studied the Koran, there were a lot of principles

that made me want to become a Muslim. If you look at some of the values that a true Muslim is about, it's deep and beautiful. But as with any religion or sect, you're subject to the interpreter. You can get a lot of false prophets. I cannot believe that a true Mohammadan would agree to a Jihad against America. When I was interested in studying to become a minister, I wanted to find the common denominator amongst all religions. I wanted to be a church of What's Happening Now, a great linker of spirit, not a divider. You've got the non-denominational churches that welcome anyone, and I wanted to be a preacher like that. Let us in the spirit of God, or whatever you call Him, or however you see Him, gather together purposefully to worship and praise God, the Spirit, the Higher Power. Sectism to me is a great divider, which makes it impossible for the at large embracement of the pure entity.

**SC: One of your recent films was *REQUIEM FOR A DREAM*, which asked you to go into some sinister territory as an actor.**

David: Well, let me address it this way: My wife and my mother haven't seen it, and I wouldn't want either of them to. The movie was dark, the story was dark, as you know. But the reality of it is so deep. It is somewhat scary, but one of the reasons why I agreed to it — because I don't play pimps and junkie scumbags — was the one thing I respect about the man I played was he's all about business. ALL about business. It happens that I'm black, but it's not about that. He's such a good businessman — you would find him just as slimy no matter what color he is. But who is this guy? He's about goods and services. "I'm not a phillanderer. You want something from me? I can get it. What are you gonna do for me?" That's the way most people function. "I'm supposed to give it to you just because you say you want it? I don't understand that! Goods and services! I'm gonna give you all you want if you service me."

Now, what you think is slimy about him is he happens to be dealing in drugs and dope. If it were pot, you might not think it were so slimy. I don't think it's right, and that's even less right the fact that there's a questionable legality about goods and services. But if I have to put myself out in jeopardy like that, my character wants sex, baby! "You ain't got no money. Excuse me, last I saw, you knocked on my door, you don't have no money, but you want the dope! Now I have to risk my ass to get you this shit. I'm smart



Keith David in *PITCH BLACK*

enough not to put myself in too much jeopardy, but you have no money and nothing to bargain with. Last I checked on the street, what you gonna give up? Cash, grass, or ass? The former two you don't have to offer, so you got to give up the bootyie."

I don't personally live like that, but one of my wife's friends called up and said that this character is such a slimeball. You call me a slimeball because a person asks me for dope, and you want me to give it away for nothing? If I gave her all I had for nothing because she was cute, you would call me a fool. You wouldn't call me a slimeball. I don't see myself as a slimeball in that film, though. He's particularly sophisticated. He's not some fucking gutter snipe selling drugs on the street. You can

trust him to provide good, clean shit. And you'll notice, not that I want to make it a racial issue, that there was not one black stockbroker up at his party, was there? All dopeheads, all looking for sex play. Did you see my character snorting or shooting dope up there? No. Nothing. So who's being slimy? Let's not make it a race issue, or even a moral thing. You can't dismiss it like that. It's about supply and demand, and you have to be smart enough to have what's in demand.

**SC: Any other thoughts you'd like to share?**

David: I've been blessed to be able to do what I do and make my living at it, but I do find it rather strange when I use public transportation and someone says, "Why are you riding the subway?" Well, if you live in this city, even if I could afford taking the cab across town, it takes me a lot longer and more expensive for me to hop into a cab to go from Point A to Point B than to take the subway. So when someone asks me that, there's an assumption that I can afford to take a limousine everywhere I go.

There's a portion of that I can understand because most people think in the Them and Us mentality, that we're over there. I'm a regular working stiff just like you. Yes, sometimes I get a job and make great money, but I don't make that money all the time. I'm very proud of the living that I make, but it's not every day. There are weeks of my life where I don't work, and that is a reality of the business. So when I make a grand salary, it makes up for the weeks I didn't work. Sometimes I work for very little money, or for nothing. I'm in pursuit of my art and do this to fulfill my soul. But I make a decent living. I would like someday to expand my horizons, but God is good every day! I'm blessed that I have the privilege to make my living this way. ♫

**MICHAEL MORIARTY Continued from PAGE 6**

The episode is called "Citizen Kates." It's filled with allusions to Kane and satirical jabs at Welles. It's quite a little educational vehicle for kids. It'll teach them about film and newspapers, especially the importance of reading between the lines and being aware of the writer's agenda. You shouldn't take everything they write as gospel. The kids also learn the need to show personal courage and stand up against a boss who's an asshole.

**SC: What's coming up next?**

Moriarty: My *HITLER MEETS CHRIST* film, shot entirely in Vancouver. It's a low-budget art film in the tradition, but not the style, of Cassavetes' *FACES*. Now that my role model is Cassavetes, one of the few authentically auteur American directors, perhaps I can

splice my acting talent and my decades of film experience together and come up with an increasingly impressive body of work with my name on it as both actor and writer. That's about as auteur as you can get.

*HITLER MEETS CHRIST* was shot in Vancouver's seediest district on a very low budget. The story follows two mentally ill, homeless men who have mysteriously assumed the personae of Jesus Christ and Adolph Hitler. I wrote the play in the late eighties. It was a recognition of how deeply performing in *HOLOCAUST* affected me. I had to write *HITLER MEETS CHRIST* to try to understand why such evil can exist. My role in *HOLOCAUST* stayed with me, because the author (Gerald Green) really captured a human being turning rotten in front of your eyes.

In portraying such evil, a certain ritualistic distance must be maintained, because there is no possi-

ble way to convey the depths of evil inherent in Hitler and the Third Reich. You just can't do it. You can only ritually reenact the story with as much dignity as an artist that you possess, and let the audience fill in the pieces. That's not a position I can take with *HITLER MEETS CHRIST*, though, because I'm playing a schizophrenic, alone and penniless and obsessed in his personal hell. [Note: Moriarty plays 'Hitler' — complete with the fascist dictator's trademark mustache — and Vancouver actor Wyatt Page portrays 'Christ'.]

As for other recent projects, I have a jazz trio, vocal CD, *Temporary Child*, available through my Web page: [www.michaelmoriartyonline.com](http://www.michaelmoriartyonline.com). I never did enjoy advertising my work, you know. That's just one of my many shortcomings as a "troubled" artist with a "checkered" career in an all too swiftly changing North America. ♫



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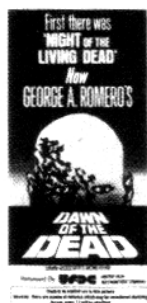
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# FILM REVIEWS

## CAPTAIN MILKSHAKE (Shocking Videos; 1970).

It's always refreshing to stumble across a virtually unknown, but wonderfully engaging, low-budget blast from the past. It gives me the (all-too-fleeting) hope that I haven't yet reviewed all of the good movies, and that all I'm left with are the dregs of Jess Franco's filmography. For this first (and only?) time outing, director Richard Crawford combines Vietnam, a motorcycle, a groovy gal, casual sex, recreational drugs, trippy visuals, a potent anti-war message, and — hell, what more could you possibly want in a hippie-era, counterculture flick!?

Geoff Gage stars as Paul, a clean-cut Marine who takes a break from his traumatic tour of Nam (hence, his grim flashbacks of killing a kid and standing next to a soldier buddy whose face is blown off), in order to head to San Diego on an emergency, death-in-the-family leave. At the airport, Paul accepts a ride from a pair of "longhairs," including Andrea Cagan (THE HOT BOX, TEENAGER) as Melissa, a sexy blonde rebel. She's from a rich family who hates her unwashed friends, while Paul's racist, right-wing home life is just as unpleasant. When foxy Melissa makes a surprise appearance at Paul's family funeral, this odd couple screw in a field, Paul snags a cool motorcycle, and the two hit the open road.

Along the way, there are some (now) classic tunes, such as Quicksilver Messenger Service's "Who Do You Love," and when Melissa initiates Paul to the joys of weed, they romp about to The Steve Miller Band's "Children of the Future." Their love story gets sappy at times (they actually roll down a grassy hill together, while stoned!), but these two are oddly ingratiating, until Melissa's hairball pals make Paul an unsuspecting accomplice in a marijuana-smuggling road trip to Mexico. The end takes some heavy emotional twists, as Paul's leave comes to an end and the pair's differences become apparent, with a finale filmed at a Berkeley Vietnam protest in People's Park.

The film's anti-war sentiments are admirable, and the result is a surprisingly ambitious and heartfelt tale of one soldier's social awakening, with characters that sidestep the usual clichés. Paul revels in his new love and mind-expanding experiences, but he isn't a dolt; Melissa might be a free-spirit, but she's also naively immature and lacks any sense of responsibility; and while the hippies are righteous in their war protest, they're also self-serving and annoying. Working with only a \$300,000 budget, the technical aspects are outstanding — with editing that emulates EASY RIDER's flashbacks and flashforwards, while Robert A. Sherry's stoned camerawork shifts from sepia to full-color without rhyme or reason. The only recognizable actor is Stuart Lancaster, who's briefly spotted as a conservative cabbie. Oh, if you were wondering about the title, the movie never explains it.

## HERE WE GO ROUND THE MULBERRY BUSH (1968).

This groovy, lusty blast of fun kicks off with mind-blowing credits (courtesy of Richard Williams Studios) and a title tune by Stevie Winwood and Traffic, before taking us into the freewheeling, fast-paced life of a horny lad in late-'60s Britain. Adapted for the screen by Hunter Davies, from his own novel, and directed by Clive Donner (WHAT'S NEW, PUSSYCAT?), this winning tale mixes one particularly randy teen, a bevy of curvaceous ladies, frighteningly mod fashions, silly fantasy segments, bad teeth (hey, it's England), and even a spoonful of introspection.

Newcomer Barry Evans stars as Jamie McGregor, a bike-delivery lad who's being driven mad by all of the comely birds in their trendy mini-skirts, and this serio-comic adventure chronicles his everyday lusts and eventual female conquests. Like any typical young man, his parents are unceasingly irritating, the opposite sex is a total mystery, his hormones are raging, and his only outlet is to daydream about these lovely lasses during surreal little vignettes. But as Jamie's story progresses, a wide variety of sexy gals begin to size him up.

Adrienne Posta plays a round-heeled local who's simply too annoying to tolerate, Sheila White is a nice religious gal who drags him to a "church rave" (with The Spencer Davis Group performing in fab white suits), sultry Vanessa Howard (GIRLY) is a giddy school minx who bounces from one lap to the next, and wealthy Angela Scoular gives Jamie a glimpse into her money-to-burn lifestyle (with Denholm Elliott popping up as her father, who becomes hilariously besotted in his wine cellar and leads a bawdy family free-for-all). But Jamie soon discovers that even though some "grotty" chick might screw him for a giggle, his loins are hottest for dream-girl Judy Geesen (TO SIR, WITH LOVE), a scrumptious bit of neighborhood tail who eventually gives him a whirl, complete with skinny-dipping scene.

Jamie's constant whining can get a bit tiring (since he has more luck with women in 96 minutes than most blokes have throughout their entire teens), but Donner keeps his journey brisk, stylish and surprisingly thoughtful — like a British re-mix of THE GRADUATE. It's aided by superb photography from Alex Thomson, who spent the '60s as Nicolas Roeg's camera operator, took MULBERRY as his first cinematographer gig, and later photographed EXCALIBUR and LEGEND.

## OZ [a.k.a. 20th Century Oz] (Just For the Hell Of It; 1976).

During the late-'70s, Australia exported some of the finest films of that era, from young directors who went onto make Hollywood blockbusters. This silly road movie by writer-director Chris Löfvén wasn't one of them. Shot for only \$150,000, it's a rock-'n'-roll homage to THE WIZARD OF OZ, Down Under style. And while the basic idea might sound as ridiculous as US shittstorms like XANADU, it's actually a strange and likeable romp.

Joy Dunstan stars as Dorothy, a sexy 16-year-old blonde from a boring small town, who checks out a local band and takes a post-gig ride in their van. One auto accident later, Dorothy passes out and wakes up in a odd new place (which looks exactly like any dusty, rural section of Australia). At a clothing shop called Good Fairy, the gay sales clerk gives her a pair of gaudy red platform shoes, and instead of a wicked witch, a pock-faced bruiser in a muscle-shirt is royally pissed that Dorothy's van just killed his brother.

Decked out in a skimpy halter top, rolled up jeans and those scarlet disco shoes, Dorothy sets out on a quest — to hitchhike her way to the big city and check out the final concert of a rock superstar named The Wizard (a tongued freak who looks like a cross between Genesis-era Peter Gabriel and The Village People). Along the way, she encounters a surfer dude (Bruce Spence, best known as THE ROAD WARRIOR's Gyro Captain), a gas station mechanic (Michael Carmen) and a tough-talking (but secretly cowardly) biker (Gary Waddell). Of course, all of these lonely blokes want to make time with this buxom dish, but Dorothy is more concerned about the vengeful brute who's still tailing her in his truck. If you're familiar with Baum's story, you know the routine — she's kidnapped, her three traveling companions help her out, Dorothy makes it

to the sold out show, and she flirts her way into the concert.

The score by Ross Wilson includes the catchy "Living in the Land of Oz" as well as many unmemorable tunes, while Graham Matters (who played Rocky in the Oz troupe of THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW) is not only The Wizard, but various supporting characters who guide Dorothy to her final destination. The film has a genuinely gritty veneer, and you've gotta love it when Dorothy uses the 'magic' of her red shoes to kick a guy in the balls. Or when she discovers the Wizard hidden behind a curtain — in this instance, a shower curtain — and joins him in the buff! At 86 minutes, this imaginative idea doesn't overstay its welcome, and this is definitely the sexiest Dorothy you're ever going to see (with the exception of Bill Osco's oft-promised, but never-produced '70s porn-version starring Kristine DeBell).







shop windows. Even stranger, the next day, while Stanley is at work, his office is attacked by another rampaging rhinoceros — identified as one of his co-workers! It seems that humans are transforming into rhinos, with this bizarre occurrence accepted by the more complacent as just another distressing fact of life.

Mostel gets to work up a heavy sweat in the film's highlight, when John becomes ill and Stanley notices that his skin is slightly gray. As John begins to howl, stomp, paw the floor, and destroy his own apartment, nearly-trampled Stanley worries that his friend is the next in line for a species shift. Stanley eventually goes on an embarrassing bender and barricades himself in his home, unable to deal with the rhinos roaming his lobby, and refusing to join them. In addition, Karen Black co-stars as Daisy, the woman of Stanley's dreams, who's eventually torn between unhappy humankind or the seemingly-content savage beasts.

The original play was a metaphor for the rise of fascism in Ionesco's Romanian homeland, but the adaptation by Julian Barry (LENNY) shifts it to the more simplistic difficulty of retaining one's individuality. Unfortunately, Stanley is a wimpy, whiny, spineless character, and Wilder plays it so well that I couldn't stomach the pitiful guy. Instead of a determined individualist, he's a schlep. O'Horgan slips in some misguided hippie-era jabs (e.g. photos of Nixon in the background) and adds a numbingly insipid musical fantasy sequence, with Stanley caged, as John and Daisy dance on the beach. At least he had the good sense *not* to show an actual transformation, and instead have it conveyed through actors' mannerisms. The score by Galt MacDermot (who wrote the music for HAIR) is unmemorable, and the supporting cast includes Don Calfa (RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD) as a waiter. The film has a cheap, backlot look, and although this might've sounded interesting on paper, on the screen it's a total shambles.

#### ICE (1970).

Financed by the American Film Institute, ICE is a powerfully subversive 16mm gem, that spins a fictional tale of rebellious citizens, an oppressive government and terrorism. The leads are a ragtag group of freedom fighters who realize that the increasingly-fascist State is actually our enemy, and the only means of liberation is through violent struggle and a unified revolutionary front. "Now is the time to take up arms against the state!" Oh, yeah, the setting of this story is New York City! While nobody would have the balls to make a movie like this today, over 30 years ago, director Robert Kramer unleashed this b&w underground epic, which not only condemns the government but offers a mosaic of grass roots revolution.

The episodic script revolves around an

#### RHINOCEROS (1973).

Attempting to adapt Eugene Ionesco's 1959 absurdist masterpiece onto film is a daunting enough task, but director Tom O'Horgan (who also directed the stage version of HAIR) only added to public expectations by reuniting the stars of Mel Brooks' THE PRODUCERS for this misguided endeavor. Initially released in a limited run, as part of the American Film Theatre (which included THE ICEMAN COMETH and Genet's THE MAIDS), this is grating when it should be comic, with an emphasis on broad physical shtick.

Gene Wilder plays timid Stanley, who's disheveled, hung over and ever in need of a drink. Meanwhile, Zero Mostel (who won a Tony Award for his Broadway performance) is his neighbor John, a pompous and condescending windbag with high standards of how humans should behave. But suddenly, a rhinoceros is spotted, charging down the city's street, smashing

underground Leftist organization that's centered in NYC, as they plan guerrilla activities, protest against American influences in Mexico, deal with internal disputes, and eventually coordinate a major, city-wide, heavily-armed offensive against the State. These aren't just long-haired freaks, mind you; they're old and young, men and women, intellectuals and naive flakes, who all have a common dedication — to selflessly rise up and create a free society. Mind you, the story doesn't encourage random, individual violence, but it definitely promotes collective terrorism when it's aimed at a repressive regime.

The film leaps between various individuals and their projects — such as making educational films on how to transport radicals across borders, stockpile guns and make homemade explosives — even as the authorities and their "security police" close in on dissenters, with National Identity Cards and Travel Cards keeping the population in check, prisoners tortured and the media kept in the dark. While some of the lengthy political diatribes are horribly tedious, the film definitely isn't all talk. In addition to casual nudity, one organizer (played by Kramer) is pulled off the street, beaten and castrated; a female rebel is shot and her friends hide the wounded girl in their home (much to their parents' irritation); and their final offensive includes apartment complex occupations, a prison break, sniper assassination, and the execution of traitors.

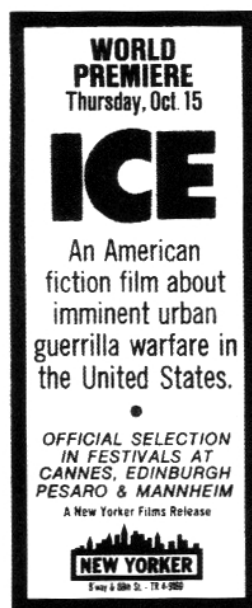
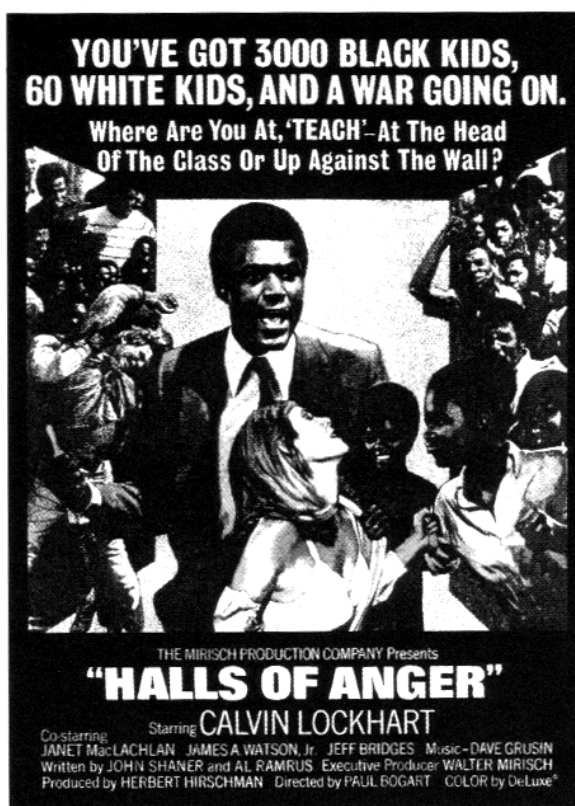
Kramer (who passed away in 1999) went from Newark, NJ community organizer to become one of America's most politically motivated indie filmmakers (of course, he's highly regarded in Europe, and barely known in the US). Nowadays, it's difficult to believe that message-heavy, radicalized films such as this not only had US distribution, but also played mainstream art theatres! Filmed throughout NYC (including authentic apartments, airports, the main Post Office and even Port Authority terminal), Kramer gives it all a raw documentary-style edginess. The amateur cast can be a bit inconsistent, but the end result is thought-provoking, long-winded, disjointed, and always fascinating.

#### HALLS OF ANGER (Shocking Videos; 1970).

Before blaxploitation flicks ruled downtown theatres, Hollywood studios tried to tap into the black audience with 'important' films such as this — which had a grittier surface, but were often preposterously naive about their topical themes. This look at racial tension in an urban high school doesn't dig too deep (and nowadays, seems more hokey than controversial), but it has solid intentions and just enough sleaze to keep you from choking on its clichés.

It begins like a big-screen ROOM 222 clone, with Calvin Lockhart (MELINDA) as high school teacher Quincy Davis, who's beloved by his clean-cut, white suburban students. But Davis' sedate world is upended when he's asked to become the vice-principal of a troubled inner city school, which (thanks to redistricting) has a new 100-to-1 division of black-to-white students. Since this is also Davis' alma mater, where he was a basketball superstud, it quickly becomes a journey back to his roots.

Davis is a cool cat, but it's hard to "reach" the student population, since the handful of bused-in white students are uptight and abused, while the black kids have never had a decent education and consider Davis a "tom." We also get 21-year-old Jeff Bridges as teenaged Doug, who pisses off the student body for being a smart "honky" and gets beaten up behind the bleachers. Ed Asner is the friendly gym coach, a pre-ANIMAL HOUSE DeWayne Jessie plays an illiterate class stoner (but savvy Davis soon gets him hooked on phonics by handing him a softcore erotic novel, and later weans him onto D.H. Lawrence), Janet MacLachlan (UPTIGHT) is a teacher who stokes Davis' romantic fires, while over-aged Rob Reiner — in a far cry from liberal Mike Stivic — is the first student to spout "nigger." Let's not forget the requisite cute blonde, who gets shit from the local sisters because their guys are sniffing around her. This leads to a girls' locker room attack (complete with gratuitous nudity), a schoolyard brawl with Bridges, and the possibility of a full-scale riot.



Unfortunately, Paul Bogart's TV-movie level direction is heavyhanded, while the script tends to wallow in strident moralizing, bland soul-searching from Davis, and sappy soundtrack tunes — then wimps out just as the situation begins to boil. Instead, it wastes time watching Davis motivate the underachievers by letting them paint a mural devoted to black pride. How socially relevant, man! Thank goodness for its great cast, authentic backdrops and top-notch cinematography by two-time Oscar winner Burnett Guffey (*BONNIE AND CLYDE*). Plus, where else are you gonna see cheerleading practice with a bongo accompaniment?

#### MY OLD MAN'S PLACE (Shocking Videos; 1972).

The concept of screwed-up Vietnam veterans and their problem fitting back into society hit the mainstream with late-'70s, big-budget fare like *COMING HOME* and *THE DEER HUNTER*, but long before these award-winners leapt onto the Nam bandwagon, smaller films embraced this powerful topic — from arthouse indulgences (*TRACKS*) and violent exploitation (*WELCOME HOME, SOLDIER BOYS*), to this hard-hitting drama.

Michael Moriarty, in his freshman film role, plays newly-returned vet Trubee Pell, who decides to take a road trip back to his family home. But first he links up with fellow soldiers William Devane as screwball Jimmy Pilgrim and Mitchell Ryan as the heavily-decorated, too-tightly-wound Sergeant Martin Flood. They pool their cash, buy a cool red convertible and plenty of whiskey, and zoom off to visit Trubee's old man (Arthur Kennedy, whose career ranged from Tony Award winning work in *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*, to unwatchable EuroSlop like *EMMANUELLE ON TABOO ISLAND*) at his remote farmhouse.

From the aloof way Trubee treats his pop, there's definitely some unresolved tension between the two, and this trip soon turns into a drunken blowout for the trio. They break into dad's wine stash and party all night, as Flood acts increasingly crazy and violent. More potential chaos arrives in the form of Helen (Topo Swope), a comely blonde college chick who's lured to the farm by horndog Pilgrim. Flood wants to rape her, Trubee slowly falls for her, and she naively decides to stick around and help fix up the rundown farmhouse.

The script by longtime TV-writer Stanford Whitmore becomes more introspective (and predictable) as it progresses — but just when you think everything looks peaceful and rosy, all of the stops are pulled out for a shocking climax. The direction by Edwin Sherin (who went onto TV-shows such as *HILL STREET BLUES* and *LAW & ORDER*) is workmanlike, but it's the actors who elevate the material. Devane has the most flamboyant role as perpetually-lecherous Pilgrim (nicknamed 'Turd' by Flood), who crudely hits on every mini-skirted gal who walks by, and gets decked down a flight of stairs when he finds his wife shacked up with a naked Marine. Meanwhile, Ryan is wonderfully loathsome as this sick, hateful motherfucker, and Moriarty quietly captures all of Trubee's inner confusion, childhood memories, and wartime horrors. Moriarty has been in so many odd gigs over the years that you might forget how intense he can be on screen. This film proves he had it nailed from the very start.

#### I START COUNTING (1970).

Years before UK director David Greene ventured to the US and helmed groundbreaking mini-series such as *ROOTS* and *RICH MAN, POOR MAN* (as well as the unintentionally hilarious anti-drug drama *THE PEOPLE NEXT DOOR*), he came up with this slight but brooding psychological thriller, which never made it to US theatres. It's primarily a showcase for 16-year-old Jenny Agutter, who soon afterward, dazzled critics in Nic Roeg's *WALKABOUT*, before adulthood landed her in US fiascoes like *LOGAN'S RUN*.

Agutter stars as Wynne, a Berkshire schoolgirl with a somewhat unhealthy preoccupation with her adult brother George (Bryan Marshall). Then again, Wynne is adopted, so she doesn't see anything wrong with a little low-key lust or sneaking innocent peeks while George is washing up in the loo. But one day, while secretly following brother about town, he stuffs a strange parcel into a remote trash can, and when she retrieves the package, it contains a sweater covered in dried blood. Instantly, Wynne wonders if George has some connection to a series of recent, brutal murders, and this misguided girl decides to uncover the truth all by herself.

As Wynne finds more clues (or red herrings), and hopes that her secret hearthrob isn't this local sexual predator, she continually returns to her real family's old, abandoned home where she used to live — located in the rural area where the murderer maneuvers — to revel in old memories and uncover more disturbing facts. Wynne even goes so far as to hide in the back of George's van for the afternoon, gets wasted on some handy liquor, and eventually has her lovesick delusions shattered by a much-needed dose of reality.

There's plenty of mood and menace along the way, even if there isn't much meat on the actual mystery, since the all-too-obvious solution deflates some of the



Frank) is raped, the guy is beaten senseless and has a joint planted on him, while the perps are a carload of ridiculously clean-cut, rich, WASP racists led by a pissy little dweeb named Bruce (David Macklin).

Tom Nardini stars as Tony Perez, the school's new kid, whose first lesson is that "beaners" shouldn't mingle with the genuine Americans. That's news to blonde beauty Janet (Patty McCormack, who filled out quite nicely since her adolescent role in *THE BAD SEED*), who dumps possessive boyfriend Bruce in order to date the infinitely hunkier Tony. Of course, the first reaction from Bruce and his pasty pals is to kick the shit out of Tony and put an end to this suburban *WEST SIDE STORY*, since touching 'their' white women is offensive. But Tony is a bright kid, so instead of resorting to physical force, he rallies the school's 50% Mexican population in a fight against discrimination and racist teachers (who force their south-of-the-border detainees to do gardening and janitorial work).

Unfortunately, a non-violent attitude become increasingly difficult when the honky scum are blowing up your car, the girl you desire thinks that demanding equal rights makes you a radical wacko, and the hard-line principal ignores anyone with skin darker than skim milk. There's only one option — a school strike, complete with placards and picket line — which, with its PG-rating, doesn't go any further than a riot on school grounds and violent retaliation by some Mexican hotheads.



The plot might sound like your basic high school rebellion flick, but it's tightly edited for maximum excitement, with highlights including an auto chase through a parking garage and a wild showdown in an airplane salvage yard. The movie's only drawback are its villains, who're the wimpiest bunch of preppy squares since John Waters' *CRYBABY*. Nardini displays lots of charisma, but McCormack's class-cutie has as much depth as a Barbie doll (and does her best acting when bound and gagged). Co-stars include Zooey Hall (*I DISMEMBER MAMA*) and A. Martinez, while "Love Has Got Me Down" is performed by The American Revolution.



**THE RUNAWAY is banned in Mexico, France, Spain, Brazil, Australia and 19 other countries. Now you can see it without a single cut.**



**THE RUNAWAY [a.k.a. Runaway, Runaway] (Video Search of Miami; 1971).**

Long before the heyday of made-for-TV movies such as *DAWN: PORTRAIT OF A TEENAGE RUNAWAY* and *DIARY OF A TEENAGE HITCHHIKER*, this low-budget outing brought the subject to the big screen, in all its R-rated, wildly sleazy glory! And what's better than an exploitation flick about the ordeals of a runaway teenage girl? How about one that includes cult-movie-king William Smith! Even better, the star of *ANGELS DIE HARD* and *THE LOSERS* is allowed to actually act, instead of just playing 220 pounds of raw meat stuffed into a leather jacket.

Fresh-faced Gilda Texter (the nude rider from *VANISHING POINT*) straps on the title role of blonde teen Ricki, who packs a duffel bag and splits her stifling rural family. As the opening credits roll, we get a montage of this 17-year-old virgin's hitchhiking travails on the way to California, including a near-rape by a middle-aged perv who gets his head cracked open with a rock. Smith drives into her life as Frank, who's heading to the West Coast and gives Ricki a lift. During their long road trip, she explains that once in Los Angeles, she's staying with an ex-boyfriend — as soon as she figures out where he lives (OK, she's not the brightest gal) — and since Frank is a private investigator who searches for missing kids, he knows the shitstorm she's about to face during her new life on the sunny mean streets of LA.

Once on her own, the script packs every possible cliché into a couple days. A friendly hippie teaches pitifully-naïve Ricki the art of panhandling, she spends her first night in the big city sleeping in an alley, and after she's attacked, Ricki ends up at a grubby crash pad, dosed out of her tiny mind on hallucinogens (complete with a cheesy trip sequence)! She's temporarily taken in by a charitable hooker (Rita Murray), who daydreams about naked Ricki when her sweaty johns pile on top of her, and tries to seduce this curious teen over to a saphic lifestyle. Smith re-enters the picture in order to help confused Ricki find her 'boyfriend' (who turns out to be queer), and when poor Ricki ultimately has to confront her fear of men, helpful Frank is happy to leap into bed with her.

On its surface, this pretends to be a warning about the perils of running away from home; in actuality, it's a seedy tale packed with drugs, deviants and nymphs. There's even a naked lesbo romp on the beach! Texter is adequate in the overwrought role, and Smith gives an engagingly earnest performance. Writer-director Bickford Otis Webber plays it totally straight (as if he was blind to the film's schlocky agenda), and while his finale gets overly somber and self-important, this is still a wonderfully sordid chunk of drive-in melodrama.

**OUT OF IT (1969).**

Lensed in 1967, but released over two years later (undoubtedly thanks to Jon Voight's celebrity catapult following *MIDNIGHT COWBOY*), this b&w coming-of-age tale was the first feature from producer Edward Pressman (long before making the leap to studio hits like *WALL STREET* and *CONAN THE BARBARIAN*) and writer-director Paul Williams (no, not the simi-

larly-named diminutive singer/songwriter). In the '70s, Williams made a handful of quirky but financially unsuccessful movies (including *DEALING AND NUNZIO*), then dropped out of the film scene, but infrequently resurfaces with thought-provoking work like 1993's assassination-themed *THE NOVEMBER MEN*.

Set in the early-1960's, during the final weeks of summer, 18-year-old Barry Gordon (*A THOUSAND CLOWNS*) plays Paul Green, a bright (but socially inept) teenager living on Long Island. As he prepares to enter his senior year, Paul obviously doesn't have a clue about interacting with girls. That doesn't stop this eccentric kid from skinny dipping in the ocean on a first date (his shocked companion politely declines) or hitting on gals who are way out of his league, such as curvaceous cheerleader Christine (Lada Edmund Jr.), who's dating Jon Voight's blonde football jock (and "overgrown gorilla") Russ.

Paul is definitely an outcast. He tries to win popularity points by joining the football team, with expectedly pathetic results. His folks are well off, so there are a few hangers-on, who stick with Paul because he has a car. And Christine teases the guy a bit — she's curious about him because he's "deep" and the exact opposite of bone-headed beau Russ. Paul's story is bittersweet but never resorts to easy treacle, since this guy often acts like an egotistical schmuck. In fact, this sorta resembles recent fare like *RUSHMORE*, since the lead is smarter and odder than all of the dullards in his midst (hence the Belmondo poster on his bedroom wall), winds up ostracized for these differences (like reading books), but is still determined to score with a hot chick! Paul also has daydream fantasies, like being a pigskin hero, and (in the film's humorous highlight) he envisions his future, which ranges from film-making super-mogul to Emperor of the World!

Voight is one-dimensional but amusingly dumb, playing a live action version of Moose from the Archie comics, and the movie's beachy backdrop makes it feel like an arthouse *BEACH PARTY* flick, complete with cinematography by a pre-*ROCKY* John G. Avildsen. Oh, I also enjoyed the authentic old Greenwich Village atmosphere during Paul's brief sojourn into Manhattan, but it also broke the mood of this early-'60s period piece, since nobody attempted to disguise the fact that this was a hippie-'n'-psychedelia era neighborhood, complete with movie marquees of late-'60s releases. It's unpredictable, caustic, confused, and — I get the distinct feeling — more than a bit autobiographical. Knowing his subsequent career, I wouldn't be surprised if Williams was once the mirror image of Paul.

**JENNIFER ON MY MIND (Just For the Hell of It; 1971).**

Hippie-era cinema is often good for some cheap thrills or drug-fueled adventures, but this heavy-handed, pseudo-rebellious outing is laughable for all the wrong reasons. Some interesting actors pop up along the way, but director Noel Black (in a far cry from his earlier gem, *PRETTY POISON*) only delivers irritating characters and 90 protracted minutes of disjointed romance. Michael Brandon is top-billed as Marcus, a wealthy, bored drifter who has one extreme bummer of a problem, in the form of an overdosed blonde named Jenny (Tippy Walker).

In flashbacks, we watch as Marcus and Jenny first meet in Venice. She's an adorable free-spirit, he's smitten at first sight, and it's all unbelievably sappy, self-important and insipid (no surprise, since the screenplay was by *LOVE STORY* hackwad Erich Segal). I'm just glad that the filmmakers told us that ditty Jenny croaks at the very end — because it gave me something to look forward to!

Two wealthy, bored nitwits do not make for a compelling film, and disposing of Jenny's body is almost played for comedy, as Marcus stuffs her corpse inside an antique harpsichord, and later totes the stiff around town in the trunk of his car.

During additional flashbacks, Jenny is irritatingly aloof and this lovesick lug tries to win her affections with drugs. He buys her grass, then hash, and even when he learns she's shooting heroin, obsessed Marcus still believes he can save this shrill, willful, junkie dream girl. Tragic, it ain't. And it doesn't help matters that both leads are hilariously wooden.

As for the supporting cast, Chuck McCann is a stranger who helps Marcus with a flat tire, when he has dead Jenny packed next to his spare; *BOB NEWHART SHOW* dentist Peter Bonerz is a psychiatrist called in by Marcus' older sis (Renee Taylor); while *SPIN CITY*'s Barry Bostwick and *TAXI*'s Jeff Conaway are unrecognizable as hippie minstrels. One of the only cool scenes has naive drug-abuser Marcus scarfing down peyote cookies with a local dealer (Bruce Kornbluth) and then running into bearded Robert DeNiro as gypsy cab driver Mardigian, who's high on speed and babbles about setting Marcus up with his sister. The street scenes are well shot by Andrew Laszlo (*THE WARRIORS*), but this is still a Wonder Bread concept of a counterculture love story. The characters are puddle-deep, and every drug moment rings false, such as when Marcus smokes a simple joint and hallucinates about his dead grandpa. It strives to be hip, but only ends up horribly shallow, dated and dull.



## CHOSEN SURVIVORS (1974).

I remember seeing trailers for this science-fiction/horror flick when I was a kid, but never had the opportunity to find out firsthand if it was as cheesy as it looked. 28 years later, I have my chance, and the answer is a definitive 'yes'. This Mexican-US co-production begins on an offbeat note, as 10 diverse and frightened characters are flown by military helicopter into the desert, herded by soldiers into an elevator, and down, down, down they go. Deep below the earth, they find a high-tech underground complex (if you've watched much bad sci-fi, you know the type — shiny metal walls, flavorless furnishings, blinking panels) and learn they've been chosen to survive the thermonuclear war that's currently raging 1758 feet above their heads.

Each new resident has been selected for their unique skills, in hopes of saving the best of humanity. On the other hand, the cast is a hodgepodge of character actors, including Congresswoman Diana Muldaur, novelist Alex Cord, Army Major Richard Jaeckel, brainiac doctor Bradford Dillman, and stubborn businessman Jackie Cooper.

Their plight begins on an apocalyptic note, but this survival tale takes a more horrific route when they discover some unwanted guests, in the form of vampire bats that are squeezing in through the air ducts and attacking ladies in their sleep. Alas, nothing stops these toothy flying fiends. They try to electrocute the bloodsuckers, Olympic athlete Lincoln Kilpatrick (COOL BREEZE) attempts to climb the elevator shaft to freedom, and soon they're battling thousands of the creatures.

Director Sutton Roy is best known for his TV-work on shows like LOST IN SPACE and CHARLEY'S ANGELS, but this big-screen career pitstop is thoroughly uninspired. Most of the actors have little to do except look worried, get scared and die, while Cooper wins the Prize Ham Award as a wealthy shitstain who instantly turns into a belligerent drunk, jumps one of the women and single-handedly fucks up the circuit room. But the biggest unintentional laughs come during the mass bat attacks, since the special effects look like total crap. The script has a few predictable 'surprises' along the way, as well as a cynical, government-conspiracy, anti-science subtext. Although certainly no mislaid masterpiece, it's a schlocky li'l B-(minus)-movie, best appreciated with a six pack (or two) of Genny Cream Ale within arm's reach.

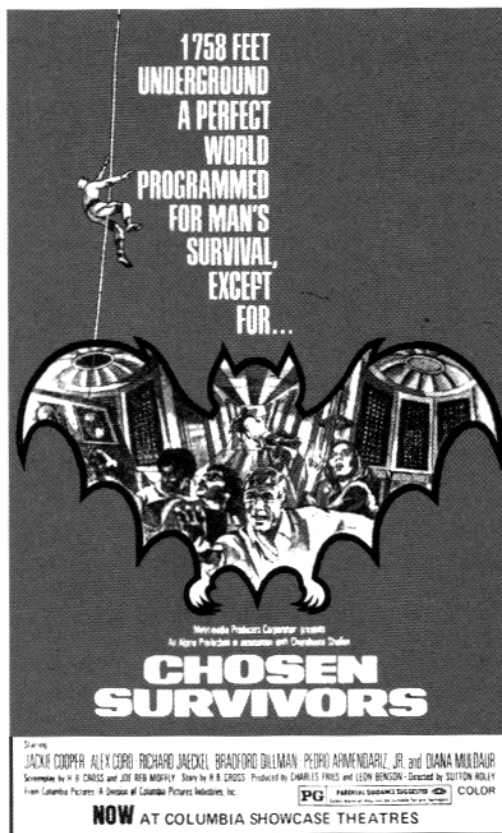
## POPULATION: 1 (Shocking Videos; 1985).

Dutch filmmaker Rene Daalder first came to the attention of drive-in fans with 1976's wonderfully subversive MASSACRE AT CENTRAL HIGH, which makes HEATHERS seem practically warm 'n' fuzzy. Almost ten years later, Daalder reemerged with this bizarre, avant-garde New Wave nonsense, which squeezes a music-video/performance-art hodgepodge into a sci-fi framework, and had him directing, scripting and writing the lyrics of its original songs. The result is truly, genuinely awful. Don't believe me? Watch it and waste 72 minutes of your own life.

The 'plot' is disjointed, to say the least. Tomata DuPlenty (lead singer of the late-'70s TechnoPunk band The Screammers, who died in August 2000) is the last human survivor of Planet Earth, following a nuclear cataclysm, and proceeds to dance, sing and babble inside a bunker filled with audio-visual paraphernalia. The only other character is chip-toothed Sheila (Sheela Ed-wards), the love of Tomata's path-etic life, who warbles tunes like "Jazz Vampire." As Tomata chronicles the ups and downs of their romance, he also fantasizes and

babbles, until we're convinced this moron is also full of shit.

We eventually learn that Tomata's fate was due to the government's misguided Noah's Ark Theory, which hoped to repopulate the human race, but turned into a mutant orgy. Now, Tomata is the only one left, since Sheila missed out on survival by stopping to check her make-up. There's little attempt at character development,



except for segueing from song to song, which ranges from rockabilly and goth, to a pop re-mix of "Ten Cents a Dance." Plus, like some Paleolithic MTV video, it resorts to crude video effects, or Tomata's hair dryer, electric toothbrush and grooming appliances floating around him.

Daalder was a longtime fan of DuPlenty's music, filmed one of The Screammers' 1979 live shows, and was instrumental in convincing Tomata that video art was the next step in their evolution (HA!), just as his band imploded. This colorful collaboration is essentially an irritating vanity project, and while its crude visuals might be cool if you're so stoned that you can't operate your VCR's 'off' switch, its heavy moments are downright pathetic. Rene deserves kudos for his no-budget ambition and energy, but the end result is pretentious overkill. Sure, it's obscure, but sometimes there's a damned good reason that something becomes a lost film. Chalk this up as a best-forgotten footnote in Daalder's eclectic career. Odd credit of the month? Associate producer: TWIN PEAKS' tall man Carel Struycken.

## DEADHEAD MILES (1972).

Terrence Malick became a cult phenom in the '70s, after directing the acclaimed BADLANDS and DAYS OF HEAVEN, but this unfathomably wrong-headed road movie was actually Malick's first film gig. He gets full credit for the script, and probably wanted to burn the negative when he saw the mess that director Vernon Zimmerman (UNHOLY ROLLERS) made of it. Think of it as an existential trucker movie — SMOKEY AND THE BANDIT meets VANISHING POINT. And good god, it sucks! At least its eccentric cast will keep you watching, even as your confusion level soars.

Alan Arkin stars as big rig driver Cooper, who slips behind the wheel of a hijacked 18-wheeler and heads across America, running into an odd assortment of characters as he struggles to unload his shipment of hot carburetors. Arkin is ill-cast as this slow-witted, blue-collar clod with a heavy drawl, and in its greatest irony, Cooper spends most of the movie driving about, but this film doesn't go anywhere!

A philosophical hitchhiker (THE JEFFERSONS' odd British neighbor, Paul Benedict) joins Cooper on his long weird haul, as he visits his ex-wife (only to find an empty lot where her trailer used to be), tosses pop bottles at passing road signs, is pulled over by the cops, clubs a Barney Fife-wannabe over the head, and cons his way through life. Only one segment is vaguely surreal, as a man in black (B-movie vet Bruce Bennett) mysterious appears from nowhere, fixes their fucked-up engine, then drives off in his all-black truck.

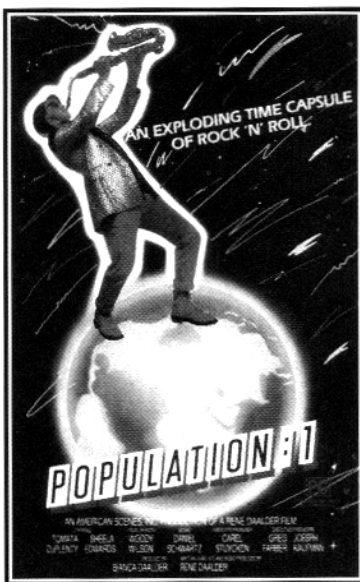
But let's get to the supporting cast, which is largely wasted. Hector Elizondo and Charles Durning show up as fellow truckers; George Raft and Ida Lupino make a cameo as a couple who have their car stolen; blink and you'll miss Richard Kiel sitting at a diner counter; director John Milius plays a State Trooper, and a black-haired Loretta Swit is a one-eyed drunk who cons Cooper out of a buck. Hell, I've suffered through more than my share of rambling, unfocused films, but this one left me truly confounded. As a character study, it's foolish. As a road movie, it's a wash out. None of the episodes are humorous, so it can't be a comedy. Its exploitable elements are nil, while its country western soundtrack will torment anyone with a triple-digit IQ. I'm not surprised that it was barely released.

## LE COUPLE TÉMOIN [The Model Couple] (1977).

After seeing only two of his amazing features — MISTER FREEDOM and WHO ARE YOU, POLLY MAGGOO? — still photographer-turned-writer/director William Klein became one of my favorite obscure filmmakers, so I jumped at the chance to check out this later effort (even though it was in French, without English subtitles). For this anarchic comedy, Klein created an ahead-of-its-time satire on voyeurism, manufactured celebrity, rampant consumerism, and media manipulation. Unfortunately, it also lacks the mind-blowing energy of his earlier cult gems.

Andre Dussolier and Anémone star as Jean-Michel and Claudine, a typical married couple who're chosen to be guinea pigs by the Ministry of the Future. They're stripped, interrogated about their lives and politics, fitted into one-piece jumpsuits, and placed in an experimental apartment (think CLOCKWORK ORANGE meets Ikea), where they're the center of a government study that turns them into instant celebrities. They're monitored 24-7. They're analyzed. TV experts dissect their behavior. They're also grilled constantly about the products they use and like — bathroom supplies, power tools, kitchen appliances, et cetera — as more unnecessary gizmos are shoved down their throats by pushy scientists who turn them into ultra-modern marketing tools.

The couple soon become tired of the non-stop interference, tour groups roaming their bathroom, diagrams on the floor showing where furniture is supposed to be placed, and being watched like zoo animals. Their plight bogs down during its





**THE DIADEM (1966) and MINI-KILLERS (1969).**

Ever since I was a kid, I was smitten with Diana Rigg — no doubt, thanks to her weekly, black-leather cat-suited appearances as Emma Peel in *THE AVENGERS*. She had class, she kicked ass, her fashion sense was impeccable, plus she was a damned fine actress to boot. But few of her fans have any knowledge of these strange, no-budget amateur gigs, which were filmed in the late-'60s, distributed on 8mm, and never acknowledged by Rigg. Think of these silent shorts as stag films for *AVENGERS* fetishists, who love watching Rigg beating the bejesus out of burly guys, amidst secret agent-style shenanigans.

If Diana's post-*AVENGERS* career had gone straight down the crapper, I'd chalk this duo up as desperate attempts to cash in on her Emma appeal; but the fact is, Rigg was starring in big studio fare such as *ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE* and *THE ASSASSINATION BUREAU* at the time, and had no discernible reason to make these crude li'l pics. Nevertheless, I'm glad she did, and that some enterprising fan transferred them to video.

The German-lensed *THE DIADEM* is in b&w, only 13 minutes long, but jam packed with action. It begins with Rigg piloting a plane into town and leaping into a convertible, while being followed by a sinister bloke. Later, at an aquarium, she swims with dolphins and accidentally loses the title jewelry in the pool, with an enemy frogman stealing it. While trying to retrieve this (cheesy-looking) tiara, she's gassed, takes a champagne break, avoids a lethargic snake, uses the hoary old 'pull-the-rug-out-from-under-him' routine against her nemesis, and continually relies on Emma Peel-style judo flips and karate chops to fend off her two-bit attackers. This extremely slight adventure boasts serviceable music and sound effects, but no dialogue, while its disjointed cutting and odd camera angles make this feel like a bizarre, avant-garde homage.

*MINI-KILLERS* is an even more outrageous endeavor. Unlike *DIADEM*, this 28-minute, Spanish project obviously had some funding behind it, since its production values are on par with most low-grade EuroTrash outings. It's also in color, which makes Rigg's groovy '60s fashions all the more vibrant. Still, director W.V. Chmielewski couldn't afford sync-sound or even looped dialogue for this half-baked gig.

The movie is broken up into four 7-minute segments, and after trippy opening credits, this silly espionage yarn commences with an assassination — perpetrated by a child's doll that squirts a deadly poison. Diana Rigg enters in a black body suit, tosses a heavyweight clod for a loop and begins to investigate these killer dollies. Part 2 has Rigg lounging on the beach, doing surveillance on a nearby luxury yacht. She's soon caught in a fishing net, but escapes while dressed in a skimpy bikini (hubba hubba). Onboard this boat, damp Diana proves she's smarter than your average low-I.Q.'ed screen villain, while collecting evidence against some rich dude who's behind the deadly devices. Along the way, she's ambushed by explosive dolls, gets captured, is put in life-threatening peril, battles the bald henchman who's been trailing her, and (of course) saves the day. This is a satisfying little oddity, and its most alluring moments are thanks to Diana's wardrobe (check out that retina-melting, candy-stripped mini-dress!) and her ultra-cool sports cars.

No question, these short films are must-see items for hardcore Rigg-ophiles. They're crude yet charming skeletons in her closet, and it's impossible not to be curious about the backstories behind them both. Since Diana still isn't talking, we may never know.

Ca. 20 Minuten  
Spielfilm mit **DIANA RIGG**  
bekannt als Emma Peel

Super 8



extremely talky middle portions, and only in the final 20 minutes do the pair rebel, by smashing their possessions and refusing orders. On top of that, their home is invaded by teenage terrorists who want to liberate the couple from their corporate captivity, until the scientists simply terminate the whole silly project and toss Jean-Michel and Claudine out into the cold.

Despite an obviously limited budget, the film is visually inventive, with plenty of ludicrous fashions (like transparent clothing) and garish color photography by Philippe Rousselot (*DIVA*, *QUEEN MARGOT*), while Eddie Constantine (*ALPHAVILLE*) appears briefly as an American slimeball who's invited over for dinner. No question, this is a unique, outlandish and abrasive 96 minutes, but it's also a severely mixed-bag that stretches a slim conceit to its breaking point.

**SKATEBOARD and TILT (Just For the Hell of It; 1978/1979).**

There are few things more painful than badly-outdated teen-splottation flicks that try to make a quick buck by glomming onto some hot new trend that's being embraced by mainstream kids. (Remember *JOYSTICKS*, Greydon Clark's video-arcade dud? Or recent shit like Corey Haim's *SNOWBOARD ACADEMY*?) I wisely avoided both of these late-'70s juvenile flicks when they were first foisted onto the public, but now, my masochistic streak convinced me to give them a second chance.

*SKATEBOARD* begins with all of the right elements. First off, you need some expert skateboarders, as well as a teen heart-throb (16-year-old Leif Garrett, whose "Surfin' USA" cover hit the Top 20 in 1977) and an enterprising adult who gets this limp plot moving. Allen Garfield (whose career nose-dived from *THE CONVERSATION* and *NASHVILLE* to this slop) plays Manny Bloom, a pathetic talent agent who owes the local Mob and is desperate for a profitable idea.

How about starting a skateboard team with his neighborhood's "crazy kids"? Rounding up all of the hottest downhill racers, freestyle champs and cute teenage girls, Manny herds them into a broken-down bus, labels 'em the LA Wheels, and takes these teens on a penny-ante tour of barely-populated gyms and dire hotels. Kathleen Lloyd (*THE CAR*) is hired on as a team escort, but has little to do.

As their underdog story progresses, the Wheels begin to win contests and make fans. There's also dreary drama aplenty, including accidents (a kid hurts his shoulder), romance (the oldest pair are screwing), violence (Manny is beaten by bookie Anthony Carbone and his goons), and booze (since Manny casually passes out brews to his teenage team). Will Manny's fear of becoming Mob landfill destroy the team, by turning him into a crabby asshole? Or will internal tensions tear them apart, as their star skateboarder becomes an alcoholic?

Despite all of its old-school skateboarding action (including real-life skating legend Tony Alva), George Gage's direction is anemic and the characters are cardboard. Garfield (whose wild comb-over deserves special billing) is so angst-ridden that you'd almost think he believed he was in a legitimate movie, while 16-year-old Leif has little to do, except look wasted and win a climactic race. Cameos include a bearded Orson Bean (as himself) handing out a trophy and PLAYBOY-babe Sondra Theodore as a race official. When it comes to deck like this, my standards aren't very high, but this unimaginative flick doesn't even cut it for mindless cheap thrills.

While *SKATEBOARD* tried to be a four-wheeled *BAD NEWS BEARS*, the pinball-themed *TILT* took a stranger, slower and more annoying route. Directed and co-scripted by the immensely untalented Rudy Durand, the selling point of this misguided mess was 13-year-old Brooke Shields (hot off of her role in *PRETTY BABY*), who only proves what we're all known for years — the gal can't act for shit. In the most bizarre turn, the usually-eccentric Donald Cammell was co-writer of this screenplay, and I can't imagine how he got suckered into working on this pea-brained project. Perhaps Durand had incriminating photos of him screwing farm animals?

Ken Marshall (*KRULL*) plays an egotistical pinball pinhead named Neil, who's persona non grata in Texas after cheating (using magnets) with a local champ called The Whale (obscenely obese Charles Durning — god, I hope he was wearing a fat suit). But when Neil goes to L.A., in hopes of instant music stardom, he encounters a scrappy California teen nicknamed Tilt, who ditches school in order to practice being a jailbait pinball princess. Neil wants to get revenge on his old "fat pile of blubber" enemy. Tilt's happy to ditch her parents (since they think her pinball winnings actually come from being a "tramp" and a "dope pusher"), and soon the pair are head-

Love, laughter, good guys, bad guys  
and America's greatest skateboarders.



The movie that defies gravity!

A UNIVERSAL RELEASE / A BUENA VISTA PRODUCTION  
starring **ALLEN GARFIELD** with **KATHLEEN LLOYD** also starring **LEIF GARRETT**  
and introducing **40 of America's Greatest Skateboarders: TONY ALVA and ELLEN ONEAL**  
Screenplay by **RICHARD A. WELLS** and **GEORGE GAGE** Directed by **GEORGE GAGE**  
Music by **MANNY BLOOM** and **GEORGE GAGE** Produced by **MANNY BLOOM** and **RICHARD A. WELLS** © 1978 UNIVERSAL CITY STUDIOS, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

ing to Texas, where nobody bats an eye when a sleazy adult shares a motel room with a pretty 13-year-old. Of course, one look at Neil's fashion sense — white pants, sparkly fringe shirt and *purse* — would convince anyone that the only time he'd touch a woman is when he's doing their hair. These two are undoubtedly the most obvious hustlers in gambling history, but the money continues to roll in, until Tilt finally challenges The Whale and the story self-destructs during its anti-climax.

The plot takes some odd turns, but someone should've kicked the film's editor in the ass and told him to pick up its lumbering pace. Shields' acting is pathetic, but in a surprising development, Marshall is such an irritating braggart (imagine Bruce Jenner doing an Eric Roberts impression) that Tilt miraculously becomes the more likable of the pair! The supporting cast is littered with familiar folks, including Geoffrey Lewis as a trucker who gives hitchhiking Tilt a lift (and thinks she's a "pervert" after Li'l Brooke offers to join him and his wife for a threesome); Fred Ward plays a high roller; while Lorenzo Lamas, Gary Mule Deer and THAT 70's SHOW-neighbor Don Stark are Tilt's unsuspecting victims. There's little sense of fun to any of this nonsense, and it's almost absurd how all of the characters treat pinball like it was high stakes Vegas poker. TILT is dull, ugly and pompous, but it did manage to make me nostalgic for the low-tech pinball machines of my youth.

#### OMICRON (1963).

This half-baked Italian sci-fi outing played a handful of international film festivals, but (not surprisingly) never made it to the US. Directed by Ugo Gregoretti and with b&w cinematography by Carlo DiPalma (whose later career ranged from Antonioni's BLOW-UP to nearly a dozen Woody Allen movies), it's an odd tale that mixes an alien visitor with broad comedy and creaky social issues. Admittedly, its talky portions were a little perplexing, since my copy lacked English subtitles.

The dead body of factory laborer Angelo Trabucco is discovered in a hunk of industrial pipe, but as doctors prepare for an autopsy, the corpse suddenly begins to twitch on the slab. To the shock of physicians and reporters, he's alive, but that's because the stiff is now inhabited by an invisible alien being known as Omicron. It takes a while for Omicron to get used to his human form; at first he moves robotically, and when taught how to walk, he's unable to stop — bouncing against walls like a superball. So begins his fish-out-the-water tale, as he spies on this planet and determines whether his race should invade this place.

Omicron imitates anything he comes across (so the sight of a rabbit has him hopping on all fours), he smokes a cigarette in one immense inhale, speed reads his way through mankind's most important literature (such as a Brigitte Bardot pictorial book), and after scientists finish testing him, he's put to work in a factory, where he moves so quickly on the assembly line that the machines can't keep up and explode. As Angelo/Omicron, Renato Salvatori is amusing during the early physical schtick, but the script loses its footing with the introduction of Rosemary Dexter as pretty Lucia, who teaches Omicron about human love (phooey!). He soon develops a conscience and becomes a labor activist during a factory strike, which leads to grimace-inducing "wacky" chases from pissed-off authority figures.

Gregoretti doesn't resort to any real special effects (with the exception of sped-up comic footage), and instead keeps his science fiction trappings decidedly low-tech (e.g. when Omicron reports back to his home world about how idiotic and repellent our culture seems, he does so via voices in his head). In the end, Omicron's use to his home planet is compromised by his human enlightenment, the invasion is diverted, while the final gag implies that all of Italy's politicians are aliens — or perhaps I missed something in the non-translation.

#### SIX PACK ANNIE (Shocking Videos; 1975).

This type of cheesy, backwoods exploitation rarely made it to New York theatres when I was a teen. That's probably because savvy distributors like AIP knew that it was more profitable to concentrate their prints in rural, white-trash Southern drive-ins. No question, this type of down-home swill is best reserved for audiences who think HEE HAW belongs on PBS.

Beauty contest runner-up Lindsay Bloom (who later starred in Larry Buchanan's HUGHES AND HARLOW: ANGELS IN HELL) squeezes into the title role of Six Pack Annie Bodine, and how could any red-blooded hick not love this gal? She wears skimpy halter tops and hot pants, chugs Miller beer while racing her beat-up pick-up, and loves to skinny dip. Unfortunately, her Aunt Tess is going to lose the family diner to the bank if she can't make the payments, while the bumbling, tub-o-lard Sheriff (who slips on banana peels and steps into every fresh cowpie) will pay off this debt in exchange for some Six Pack snatch.

In between the barroom brawls, local louts

lusting after Annie, and a tsunami of lewd gags and painful slapstick, Annie and her boy-hungry girlfriend Mary Lou (Jana Bellan) try to save the diner from foreclosure. They take a road trip to Miami and visit older sis/prostitute Flora (Louisa Moritz, in a see-thru negligee), who instructs them on the art of seducing "sugar daddies." Alas, Annie quickly discovers that city folk's kinky fetishes (like dressing up as Napoleon?) are too bizarre for her simple tastes. And let's not forget a last-minute, feel-good, predictable finale.

There isn't much actual nudity from the ever-teasing Bloom, but it's refreshing to watch a strong-willed gal who has a little meat on her bones, even if her braided Li'l Miss Innocent routine begins to grate after a while. The oddball supporting cast includes Stubby Kaye as a fast-talking traveling salesman; GREEN ACRES-vet Sid Melton as one of Flora's nervous clients; Raymond Danton plays a big city con man who hustles Annie; Doodles Weaver, who spends the entire movie playing checkers in the diner; a last-minute Billy Barty cameo; and in one of his earliest gigs, a pre-BABYLON 5 Bruce Boxleitner as Bobby Joe, Annie's closest thing to a beau. Director Graydon F. David's work is bland, and this idiotic hokum is best enjoyed as it was in '70s Southern ozoners — with a handy cooler full of cheap beer, while your first cousin is putting out in the back seat.

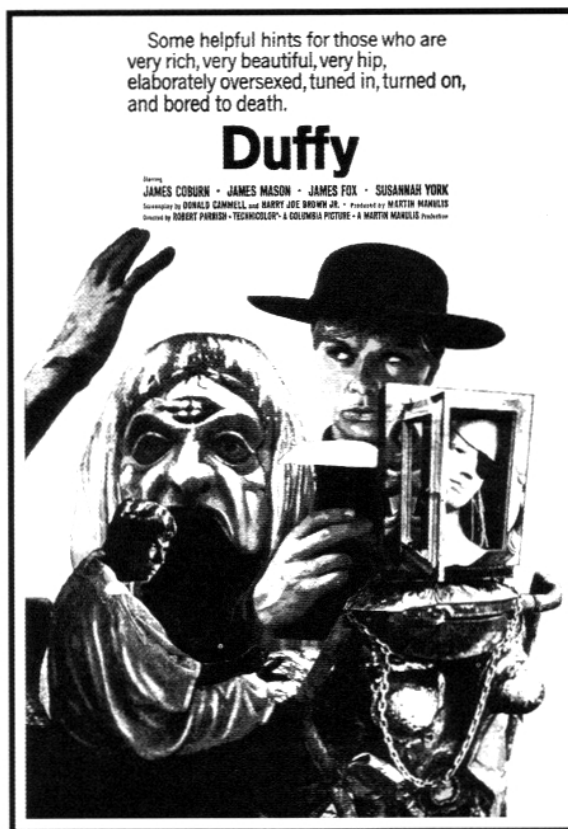
#### DUFFY (1968).

In the 1960's, James Coburn was the coolest mainstream actor in sight, thanks to groovy comedies like THE PRESIDENT'S ANALYST and the Derek Flint duo. Hell, the guy actively publicized the fact that he'd tried acid! DUFFY offered Coburn yet another in his long line of anti-authority characters, and directed by Robert Parrish (CASINO ROYALE), this mod European crime comedy is playful, colorful and never takes itself seriously. But what makes this romp even more notable is the fact that it was co-written by the late, great Donald Cammell (PERFORMANCE).

Filmed under the working title of AVEC-AVEC, James Mason co-stars as mega-wealthy shipping magnate J.C. Calvert, while a pre-PERFORMANCE James Fox plays his bored son, Stefane, who comes up with a scheme to rob his own father of £1 million while it's being transported on a luxury liner. Aiding Stefane in his plan are John Alderton (ZARDOZ) as wimpy step-brother Antony and Stefane's girlfriend Segolese (Susannah York, who looks smashing in her fab fashions and array of bikinis). There's only one small problem — they'll need a little extra help, in the form of the ever-suave Coburn as international smuggler Duffy.

After some initial reservations about this inside job, Duffy comes on board (thanks to the bed-hopping Segolese), while Stefane transforms this heist into a full-blown "happening," which continually annoys the ever-professional Duffy. The actual robbery on the high seas involves disguises, scuba suits, psychedelic party masks, a fishing boat, explosives, purchased corpses, and several last minute twists that liven up the climax.

The cast seems to be having fun with this caper, and Coburn is as suave and confident as ever, but it's the outer trappings that make the film memorable, such as Duffy's wild Tangiers apartment, packed with toys, pop-art sculptures and piecemeal mannequins. In fact, the film overflows with outrageous style — from the photography by Otto Heller (PEEPING TOM), to the slot machine opening credits and the picturesque European backdrops — so it's unfortunate that the basic story isn't more compelling. Strip it down to the essentials and all you have is a middling episode of IT TAKES A THIEF. It's amusing, but also a bit disappointing, when you consider all of its potential.





**EVILSPEAK (Video Junkie; 1981).**

I'm sure most of you are familiar with this late-night horrorama, which handed beloved character actor Clint Howard one of his rare leading roles. Hard to believe, I'd never seen this schlocky revenge-romp — which mixes TAPS, CARRIE and THE EXORCIST — until snagging the uncut 100-minute print, which restores all of the outrageous gore that was snipped from the R-rated US release. It's a jaw-droppingly stupid film, all right, but it's also prime drive-in dreck, packed with bullies who deserve to be slaughtered and a nerd who goes medieval on his enemies.

Following a 16th-century prologue featuring a devil-worshipping monk and a topless virgin's beheading, we're introduced to a present-day military academy that was built on the land belonging to that ancient Satanist. Clint (22-years-old, but still playing a teen) is Coopersmith, a "welfare-case" orphan who's ridiculed by his shitwad fellow-students and detested by the gung-ho teachers. During a punishment detail, Coopersmith discovers grisly religious relics in the chapel's basement and borrows a book with a big fat pentagram on its cover. As if this wasn't ridiculous enough, when a bitchy secretary steals Coopersmith's book, she's attacked in her apartment by the school's stockyard of hungry live pigs(?) and has her guts visibly torn out while naked in her shower! Yeah!

We've all felt like outcasts when we were growing up, and Coopersmith comes up with a sensible plan to deal with it — he programs his computer for a black mass! When student bully Bubba (Don Stark) and his soccer-jock pals murder Coopersmith's cute puppy, the final 15 minutes bust loose with a righteously cool and bloodthirsty massacre inside the school's chapel. The showstopping moment has Clint rising from a fiery pit, brandishing a sword and a wild perm, as everybody dies! The graphic gore truly makes the movie, as rubbery heads are chopped off or split open, a still beating heart is ripped from a chest, and those lovable pigs tear apart Coopersmith's tormentors.

Clumsily directed by Eric Weston (whose career went...nowhere?), the 'adult' cast includes Charles Tyner as the school Colonel, Hamilton Camp as a teacher and Lenny Montana as a friendly cook. But the scariest damned thing in the entire movie is R.G. Armstrong as drunken handyman Sarge, who swills hooch in a dirty under-



shirt, gets kicked in the balls by Clint, and has some memorable dialogue (he growls at Howard, "I'm gonna show you how I make a little boy into a little girl."). It's an awful, incredible, unintentional laugh-riot.

**THE TAKE (Video Search of Miami; 1974).**

This hard-boiled cop caper from director Robert Hartford-Davis (BLACK GUNN) mixes dirty cops, drugs, mobsters, murder, blackmail, and — for a bit of a blaxploitation edge — Billy Dee Williams as a black Dirty Harry (but with funkier fashion sense). Based on the British novel "Sir You Bastard" by G.F. Newman, it obviously went through some major revisions in order to transplant the story to New Mexico.

Slick and suave as ever, Billy Dee stars as San Francisco Police Lieutenant Sneed, who's transferred to Paloma, NM to help solve their escalating problems with the mob. In fact, the film leads off with a heavily-armed jailbreak in the middle of a packed courtroom's gangland trial, so it's good Sneed and his itchy trigger finger show up and casually blow away several of these syndicate perpetrators. But Sneed also has a secret. He's on the take and plays both sides of the fence — bending every rule of police work to take down the mobsters, even as he's raking in payola on the side.

As usual with this type of studio exploitation, the supporting cast is a major reason for sticking around. Albert Salmi is a Police Captain; Vic Morgan plays the city's head gangster Manso, who has a bad heart and a banana-yellow leisure suit; and Eddie Albert shows up as Paloma's blustery Police Chief, whose blood pressure is about to blow, thanks to Sneed's unorthodox approach to law enforcement. In the most memorable casting choice, Frankie Avalon is a greasy stool pigeon who dresses like Tony Manero's retarded cousin.

The film's idea of melodrama (Sneed's attempts to win back an old flame, played by Tracy Reed) are flat and hokey, but Hartford-Davis wisely keeps it to a minimum, in favor of cramming a shitload of story convolutions and action into barely 90 minutes. No surprise, it ends up disjointed and incoherent, and this is a rare example of a movie that could've used an extra 15 minutes to flesh out its characters and motivations. Billy Dee is fine as this con man cop, but he's all surface and little substance, as is this entire slapdash flick.

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# LLOYD SPEAKS!: An Interview with Actor JOSEPH TURKEL

Interview by ERIC CAIDIN

Joseph Turkel is undoubtedly best known to most moviegoers for two supporting roles — Lloyd, the Gold Room's ghostly bartender in Stanley Kubrick's *THE SHINING* (1980) and as fatherly replicant manufacturer Eldon Tyrell in Ridley Scott's *BLADE RUNNER* (1982). But few fans of these two genre classics realize that Turkel's impressive acting career spans back to the late-'40s, with appearances in hundreds of movies and television shows. Turkel has worked with directors as diverse as Kubrick, Roger Corman, Robert Wise, and Bert I. Gordon. He's appeared in epic studio productions like *THE SAND PEBBLES* (1966) and a long line of low-budget quickies beginning with *The Bowery Boys*. He's shared the screen with varied icons such as Jack Nicholson, Richard Pryor, George C. Scott, Ronald Reagan, and the inimitable Timothy Carey. Plus, who else could boast of appearing in not one, but three films by Stanley Kubrick? No question, Joseph Turkel has done it all, and it's a pleasure to publish this interview, conducted by Eric Caidin from the Hollywood Book & Poster Company.

**SC: Let's start at the beginning of your career. How did you get started in the film business?**

Joseph Turkel: I was a young actor in New York, just starting, and a director came by looking for some locations in New York and looking at actors as well. I came in on a call, he spotted me, liked me, and that was it — in a picture called *CITY ACROSS THE RIVER* in 1948. And that's going back.

**SC: How did you meet Stanley Kubrick for the first time?**

Turkel: I did a picture called *MAN CRAZY* (1953) and one day my agent got a call, and he said "Joe, there's a new outfit out of New York called Harris and Kubrick, and they want to talk to you." So I went out to meet them and [he said] "Hello, my name is Stanley Kubrick and this is James Harris." I said, "How do you do, Mr. Kubrick, Mr. Harris —" Then he stopped me, and said "Joe, do me a favor. Whenever we talk, my name is Stanley. Please, call me Stanley," which was very nice, and he made me feel at ease. He saw *MAN CRAZY*, he liked my part in it, and we were off and running on a picture called *THE KILLING* (1956), which was the first I did for him.

**SC: You were the first actor to do three films with Kubrick?**

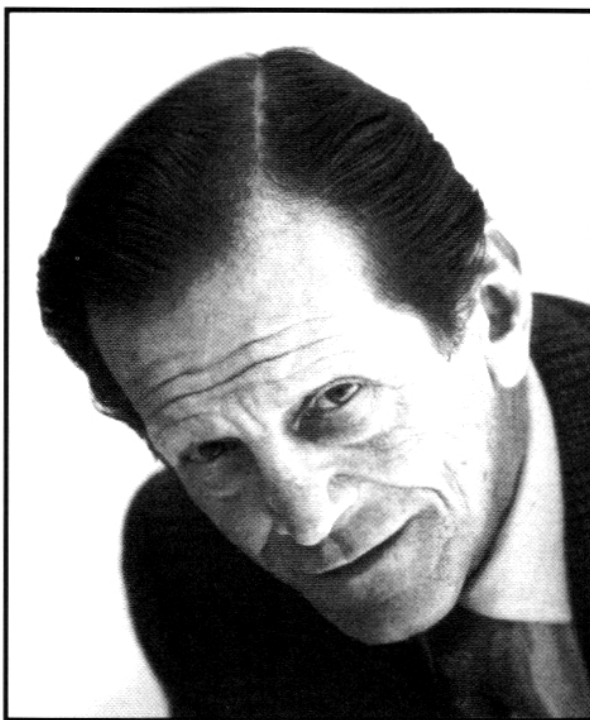
Turkel: The very first, yes. The first one was *THE KILLING*, where he got everyone's attention. That picture only cost \$375,000 and it was a B-picture, as we know them. It was a small film, with good actors, and he broke through with that picture. But he really burst the seams on the door and made a total entrance with *PATHS OF GLORY* (1957).

**SC: Of course, after *PATHS OF GLORY*, you were in *THE SHINING*. But I'd like to talk a little bit about some of the films you did between those two films.**  
Turkel: Twenty years! My goodness.

**SC: You worked with Timothy Carey, of course, in both *THE KILLING* and *PATHS OF GLORY*. And you**

**also worked with him in Bert I. Gordon's *THE BOY AND THE PIRATES* (1960). You have any interesting stories to tell about Timothy Carey?**

Turkel: Oh, Tim is delightful, may he rest in peace. He was his own man, and he would do anything to call attention to himself in a scene. All the actors would say, "Tim, will you tone it down a little? Just play the scene." (laughing) He was a nice man, and he had a nice career...Let me say this, all the producers who hired him had to pay a price. However, they got something for what they paid. He was well worth the price.



**SC: You also appeared in three films for Bert I. Gordon, *THE BOY AND THE PIRATES*, *TORMENTED* (1960) and *VILLAGE OF THE GIANTS* (1965). How did you get hooked up with Bert I. Gordon?**

Turkel: It's like it happens all the time. They see me in a movie. He saw me in something and I did three for him as well. I haven't seen Bert in the longest time. I don't even know if he's still alive, but I imagine he is. He had a lovely family...I worked many times for directors that I've worked for before, which is quite a complement to me, that they think enough to hire me back.

**SC: Richard Carlson was in *TORMENTED*? How did you like working with him?**

Turkel: No good. A terrible man. He's dead, and I shouldn't speak ill of the dead. He shot a pistol off by my ear, and I got tinnitus on account of it. I have tinnitus in both ears — a ringing in the ears — and he shot that pistol off, and that did it. Not only that — oh, god — no, forget it. He's a horrible human being. Let's leave that alone.

**SC: In *VILLAGE OF THE GIANTS*, you worked with a lot of up-and-coming young stars, like Tommy Kirk and there was —**

Turkel: Beau Bridges. Mickey Rooney, Jr. was in that. Joy Harmon. They were all nice kids. That was a good, quick picture, and it made some money. I played the sheriff.

**SC: You were also in three Bowery Boy films? Is that correct?**

Turkel: (laughing) Yes. The first one was *ANGELS IN DISGUISE*, then *TRIPLE TROUBLE*, and — oh gosh — one more, but I've forgot the name of it.

**SC: Were they all for the same director?**

Turkel: Bill Beaudine. I was just breaking into films. That was 1948. I did *CITY ACROSS THE RIVER*, and this was my second picture, a Bowery Boy picture. And he paid me a great complement, which I took home with me that night and thought about a great deal. He said "Joe, you have excellent instincts. As a young actor, you'll go far."

**SC: Of course, Beaudine directed over 300 pictures, and was known as William "One Shot" Beaudine. He was known for doing the one take and going right onto the next.**

Turkel: That's right. They gave him those Bowery Boy pictures and he had one rule: Seven days! And we got the picture done in seven days. Today, Stanley Kubrick would've rehearsed for 77 days before we'd shoot.

**SC: How did you like working with the Bowery Boys?**

Turkel: Delightful. They were all street kids out of New York, and they were nice men, every one of them...The Bowery Boys, let me explain, was a great learning process. I learned about quick shooting and ad-libbing. You better be on your toes. Bobby Jordan. Billy Halop. Huntz Hall. They were quick, smart, bright men.

**SC: How many films have you done approximately?**

Turkel: I should go to the Guild, and get a list of all of the things. It's close to 300 or 350, including television shows.

**SC: What were some of the favorite things you worked on?**

Turkel: There are three favorite movies. That's *PATHS OF GLORY*, *BLADE RUNNER* and *THE SHINING*. Those are my three diamonds.

**SC: Any favorite TV shows?**

Turkel: Well, I did westerns. I did easterns. (laughing) I did all of them. You name it. I did four *BONANZAS* — incidentally, the nicest man I have ever met in Hollywood, after fifty years, was Dan Blocker. The lovely Texan, Dan Blocker. He was sweet as sugar, may he rest in peace.

**SC: You were in *HELLCATS IN THE NAVY* (1957)?**

Turkel: The only picture that Ronnie [Reagan] ever did with his wife. I had two or three scenes with Ronnie. He's a nice man — I'm not talking politics here — he's just a nice human being. We spoke one day, quietly, by ourselves, and I said "Ronnie, what's this I hear about you running for political office?" "Yeah, I'm thinking

about leaving pictures and getting into politics." I said, "Wait a second. You're kidding me. You'll be sensational." He says, "Why? What makes you think that, Joe?" I said, "Look at that Irish smile of yours. You'll talk to those old blue-haired ladies and those old pink-haired ladies, and you'll do superbly." He laughed and he thanked me. That's the way he was.

**SC: Any recollections of working on the crime film THE PURPLE GANG (1960)?**

Turkel: Yes, one, which scared the hell out of me. About a year after it came out, I got a phone call. "Hello?" "Is this Joe Turkel?" I said, "Yes, who is this?" He said, "You played me in a movie called THE PURPLE GANG. My name is so-and-so." I forget his name — Bernstein — they were the Bernstein Brothers, out of Detroit. "I want to congratulate you. I think you did a good job. I gotta go now... click." It was one of the head gangsters, that survived all those years, from The Purple Gang. I don't know how he got my phone number. I never heard from the man again. Nobody was playing a joke either. Amazing.

**SC: You worked with Steve McQueen on THE SAND PEBBLES (1966).**

Turkel: That was for just a little under one year. We spent five months in Taiwan, three months in Hong Kong and two months back in the studio. That's two months shy of a year. Every actor wants to do a super spectacular, one big epic, and that was my epic. I could tell you stories about McQueen. Nicest guy alive — off-camera. After the day was over, "Hey, Turk. Let's get a beer." We all went to bed early, knowing we had to get up at five o'clock the next morning, but all of the actors socialized. But Steve was very protective of himself, on-screen. He was insecure, the poor guy, may he rest in peace as well...Incidentally, most of the critics who talk about that picture say it's the finest thing that McQueen ever did. And it so rivaled his real life — abused as a child, a loner in life. That's why he was superb in it.

**SC: You worked with Roger Corman too in THE ST. VALENTINE'S DAY MASSACRE (1967). How did you like working for Corman?**

Turkel: There are directors who can trust the actor. He trusted most of the actors on that picture. He knew that we knew our stuff, that we'd get on the ball, hit the mark, and do everything correctly. He let us do our thing, and he never bothered me. A fine director.

**SC: You were in a movie called THE ANIMALS (1970) as a character named Peyote?**

Turkel: Correct. I've got a story to tell you about that one. It was shot in Arizona, and in the 70's, it was the time — if you remember — of the hijackings. All of the planes were being hijacked and landed in Cuba, and the government was angry. As a joke, when I came to the airport, I got my tickets and I said "What time do we get to Havana?" I was going to Phoenix, but I wanted to be a wise guy, so I opened my mouth. Two seconds later, two FBI men grabbed me and for an hour they grilled me. "What do you mean, Havana?" "Were you going to take this plane?" "Don't lie to me mister. What's your name?" Well, they raked me over the coals. I was kidding, of course, and I realized, "Joe, these are tough times we live in, so no jokes!"

Dick Bakalyan did that picture, and Dick and Jerry Bakalyan produced it. It was the first time I rode a range horse. I did a lot of westerns, but they were all



**Turkel and Stanley Kubrick on the set of THE SHINING**

studio horses, and these were wild horses out in Arizona, and they didn't know about movies or takes or cuts or anything like that. They weren't a trained horse. Well, they got me on one of those horses, way out in the desert, and I rode for an hour and it scared me to death. I was hanging on for dear life. I finally stopped him, turned him around and got back, but it was exciting. Let me tell you one other thing — when the horse finally stopped, I had on a cowboy hat, guns, chaps, spurs, and I looked around and said "Gee, I'm on a horse, in the middle of the desert, and this is what I read about when I was a kid in New York at nine, reading about westerns. And here I am now, actually living one." It was exciting as hell.

**SC: There were a couple other films that I wanted to ask you about. WHICH WAY IS UP? (1977) with Richard Pryor.**

Turkel: Richard Pryor. Oh, man. An unbelievable talent. Not insecure, but very aware of the insults that blacks received down through the decades. He was aware of the way you said the word 'Le-roy' or 'Le-roy', looking for the connotation of perhaps an insult. He was aware of all of that, and very sensitive to the race issue — maybe overly sensitive perhaps — but he was extremely sensitive of that particular area...A giant talent, oh my god. Everybody today pays homage to that man, he was so great.

**SC: Plus, you were in THE HINDENBURG with George C. Scott.**

Turkel: I was in two pictures with George C. Scott. I did EAST SIDE, WEST SIDE, one of my favorite television shows. I starred in that, in New York. George C. Scott, myself, and a lovely cast. I also worked with him in THE HINDENBURG. You know, George C. Scott is such a dominating actor. He's so prepared, and so qualitative, and he was so screwed up. I don't want to say things that are negative about some-

body, but he had his problems — as we all do. How he handled his problems is another matter.

He was larger than life. He gets up on a soundstage, and there's nobody that gets close to him. There was one scene in a play he did — I don't know the name of the play — it called for him to vomit. After the show was over, they were cleaning the theatre and the stage, and there was vomit on the floor. He actually threw up when he was supposed to. That's what a consummate performer he was. He felt it so strongly and he just threw up, behind a couch, and they found the vomit behind the couch. That's what a giant he was. The best actor I ever worked with. No question.

**SC: The final film you worked with for Kubrick was THE SHINING. Did you guys keep in touch over the years?**

Turkel: Never. Never. I walked over to him, and I told him, "Stanley, you are now an intimidating man." We were together alone, mind you — and I said, "I have not seen you in 20 years, and your work is superb. Here you are, Stanley Kubrick, the number one director in the world. You've done 2001, DR. STRANGELOVE, LOLITA, all those great films. You must have changed, Stanley. He said, "Turk, I'm still the same. I haven't changed. What's there to change? There's still the Yankees, still Joe DiMaggio... which we used to talk about. Why would you think I'd have changed?" And I felt embarrassed, because he hadn't changed at all. With the greatness of the films that he had done, he was still the same from the very first moment I saw him, to the last day. He'd come onto the set with rumpled trousers. His hair never met a comb. And he was just that way.

**SC: Did you talk to him after THE SHINING?**

Turkel: We walked off the set, and he thanked me. "Joe, you are of inestimable value. Your scenes in THE SHINING are some of the finest in the picture. I want to thank you very much." He never liked to hug — I'm a hugger — so we shook hands, he tapped me on the shoulder, I tapped him on the shoulder. He

walked his way, I went to my dressing room, and I never saw him again...I also told him, "I don't want to hear this. No more 20 years between pictures." He laughed. "We'll see what we can do." And I never saw him again.

**SC: Let's go to BLADE RUNNER. How did you get the part?**

Turkel: Strictly from THE SHINING. Ridley Scott said "I want that man to play Tyrell." It was amazing. I had some difficult times with that picture. At the time I made the film my father was staying with me, and he was very ill. I had difficult times, but I'm not going to go into that now.

**SC: How did you like working with Ridley Scott?**



**Joe Turkel in BLADE RUNNER**



Turkel: A nice man. In fact, Ridley Scott did Kubrick. Shot after shot after shot.

**SC: He was a perfectionist. Every shot had to be perfect.**

Turkel: Every shot. But the way he set his shots up and laid his shots down were Kubrick's. It was mentioned in this magazine I read, that a shot in *PATHS OF GLORY* was the exact copy of what Ridley Scott did in *BLADE RUNNER*. The same set-up. But what director didn't admire Stanley? You know what Peter Sellers called Stanley? He called him God... As far as Ridley, he did some magnificent stuff. His visual sense is closest to Stanley's. Visual. I didn't like Hannibal Lector eating the brains, that was nonsense. I did not like *GLADIATOR*, for a simple reason — five minutes of talking, five minutes of fighting, five minutes of talking. It was a program picture with not much excitement, except what he generated through the violence.



Richard Attenborough and Turkel in *THE SAND PEBBLES*

**SC: The first thing you have to do is compare that with Kubrick's *SPARTACUS*.**

Turkel: That's right. The *SPARTACUS* battles were real battles.

**SC: I'd like to ask you about your experiences with some of the actors you've worked with, such as Kirk Douglas in *PATHS OF GLORY*.**

Turkel: Very workmanlike. Very professional. Knew his stuff. He was not above telling — "All right, Joe, look this way when I talk." He was ordering, but OK, he was Kirk Douglas. I looked at Stanley, and he nodded like, "Go ahead, do what he says." And Kirk Douglas, naturally it was his picture, and he'd let you know that he was the star and he wanted things done his way. He also had great fights with Burt Lancaster — "Kirk, don't

tell me what to do." They liked each other, but there was that professional conflict between the two.

**SC: How was the relationship between Kubrick and Douglas? Did they get along well?**

Turkel: Yes, but at the very end they didn't. It was a good falling out, which I'm not going to go into. There was a huge falling out, and they never spoke again... Stanley, as nice as he was, mind you, was not above using all of the 'f' words and 'mf' words when he got angry. But he never raised his voice. Stanley would talk in a quiet monotone, but he'd let you have it.

**SC: Of course, Lawrence Tierney just passed on. I know you didn't work with him, but did you have interaction with him at all?**

Turkel: Yes, I'll take it. There's got to be something.

**SC: Are you still working now?**

Turkel: No, I'm not working now. What I'm doing now is I'm lecturing. I'm going around the country talking at universities, about Stanley Kubrick primarily. I'm doing some writing, and I may do a book, and I've got a title to it too — "7:30 Make-up." I've registered that title incidentally, so it's mine.

**SC: I guess you also have plans to start to appear at some of the major film conventions around the country.**

Turkel: I've been to a couple, yes. In Chicago, San Francisco, a couple here in L.A. And we'll do those, so I'll be around. ☺

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# SHOCK CINEMA talks with Pioneering Exploitation Auteur LEE FROST

By CHRIS POGGIALI

Lee Frost, the multi-talented filmmaker behind such bargain basement masterpieces as *LOVE CAMP 7*, *THE SCAVENGERS*, *THE THING WITH TWO HEADS*, and *THE BLACK GESTAPO*, could very well be the exploitation world's best-kept secret. Entire books have been written about Herschell Gordon Lewis, Al Adamson, Andy Milligan, and a plethora of Euro directors, and it seems like every week some magazine or website is running an interview with Jack Hill or an article about Ted V. Mikels; meanwhile, the no-nonsense cinema of Lee Frost has gone virtually unnoticed, with a few notable exceptions. Bill Landis, in his groundbreaking early '80s fanzine *SLEAZOID EXPRESS*, was the first person to attach any kind of artistic merit to the films Frost made in collaboration with producer Bob Cresse. A few years later, Charles Kilgore wrote several excellent articles about Frost's Western roughies and shockumentaries in his influential 'zine *ECCO*, the title of which came from a mondo movie Frost re-edited for U.S. release in 1965.

But if you're a Frost fan, it's slim pickings otherwise. And it's not like his movies are hard to find. Except for the elusive 1964 nudie *LOVE IS A FOUR-LETTER WORD*, Something Weird Video has all of his '60s films in their catalogue, along with other Cresse releases — many of them foreign titles — that Frost re-edited without credit. *THE HOUSE ON BARE MOUNTAIN* (1962) and *THE DEFILERS* (1965) are even available on DVD now. So are a few of his later, more mainstream films, like *THE THING WITH TWO HEADS* (1972) and *DIXIE DYNAMITE* (1976), which weren't even mentioned by the critics who trashed his 1995 comeback effort, *PRIVATE OBSESSION*.

Three years ago, Mike Vraney from Something Weird stumbled across prints of two long-lost Frost treasures, *THE ANIMAL* (1967) and *THE PICK-UP* (1968), in a film vault in Copenhagen. How many Internet message boards lit up with the news? How many publications, besides the one you are now holding, bothered to review both of the movies?

Forget it. That's the past. Let's concern ourselves with the future. Let's start talking about Lee Frost.

**SHOCK CINEMA:** You're living in New Orleans now. Are you from there originally?

Lee Frost: No, I was born in Globe, Arizona on August 14th 1935. My family lived in a little town called Miami, which is in the hills about 150 miles north of Phoenix. My father's name was Leslie Emerson Frost, but he changed it to Jack Frost legally so he could cash a check somebody gave him. I don't know why.

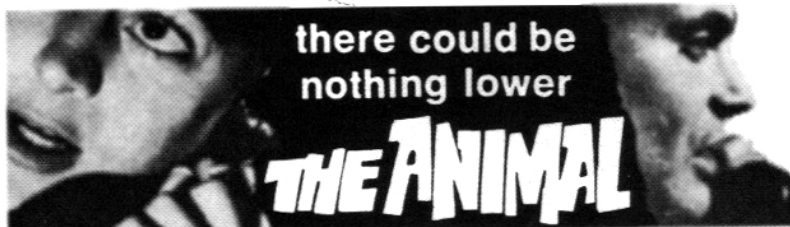
(Laughs) We lived in Glendale, California for about a year, and when I was 5 years old my father got a job with Stewart's Pharmacy, which is like the Thrifty drug store of Honolulu, Hawaii. So we moved to Oahu, Hawaii, and he managed a drug store there. On December 7th, 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and I was there. We were in Kaimake at the time, wondering if the Japanese were going to come and take us as prisoners. My father became a Civil Defense worker, and my mother and I were evacuated from there and went to Alhambra, where she met up with her sister. I eventually wound up in Hollywood and got a job with Telepics, which was a place on Western and Sunset that did commercials. Working there was a very good education for me. I never went to film school or anything like that.

**SC:** They produced commercials for national television?

Frost: They did. In fact, I was involved with the very first Toyota commercial that was ever made in the United States. I went to Palm Springs, representing the car company, and I shot this car moving across the desert at a hundred miles an hour, and that's what it said when it swept past the camera — "100 miles" was written in the sand, superimposed. But the car didn't go a hundred miles an hour because there was something wrong with the engine. It only went 20 miles an hour. Our director — some guy from the Directors Guild — said, "I can't make this car go slower and let you superimpose '100 miles an hour' behind it in the sand! That's not right!" I told him, "We could do that just as easily by slowing the camera down." He said, "No, we can't! I won't do that!" We had to take the car to a garage, but the tools didn't do anything to the engine because these were regular tools and we needed metric tools. It was terrible. We got it finished somehow, but it was a mess.

**SC:** Your first feature film was the 1962 nudie *SURFTIDE 77*?

Frost: That's right. It was about a detective looking for a girl with a butterfly birthmark on her left tit. That was my storyline. I wrote it. I made that movie for myself, but I didn't know what to do with it when I got done. My partner met a guy named Bob Cresse, who had made a picture called *ONCE UPON A KNIGHT*. We had two films, so we formed Olympic International.



**SC:** Another one of your early films, *THE HOUSE ON BARE MOUNTAIN*, just came out on DVD.

Frost: That was my next film, made with Wes Bishop. Wes had a director who didn't know what to do and

didn't know how to get there. It was utter confusion. They were building all kinds of sets, but they didn't have it started yet, and they were on a stage in Hollywood, on Sunset Boulevard — a small stage that had been a theatre at one time, but the seats had been removed and these trashy little movies were being shot there. I took over the picture. I said, "We're gonna take all this out, throw it away and make a good little movie." And that's what we did. Cresse was in it. He had played the same basic character in *SURFTIDE 77*, so we brought him back as Granny Good. Took us about two weeks to shoot. We were in the distribution business suddenly. We had 3 films — we were in the big time.

**SC:** Were there any big censorship battles with those early Olympic titles?

Frost: There was a problem with one of the films — it may have been *HOUSE ON BARE MOUNTAIN*. At that point in time, there were only 4 or 5 films after *THE IMMORAL MR. TEES* that were getting tits and ass on the screen, and we were right in that pack. The fight with the cops was hysterical. We were laughing at it, and yet there were people going to jail for showing a nipple. We didn't want to go to jail. We were just having fun — three or four kids having fun. We stood strong, said "Leave us alone, we're gonna keep doing this," and I guess they said, "OK."

**SC:** I just watched *THE DEFILERS* for the first time the other night, and I must admit, I wasn't crazy about it. It looks good, especially on DVD, but there's not much to the story.

Frost: Well, that was a film I didn't write. That was a David Friedman wonder. David is really one of the golden people of the world. He's a great fellow, but he admits up front that he doesn't know how to make a movie, he doesn't care how to make a movie, he just wants a movie done so he can put it on the screen and you can buy a ticket and see it. So when you read a David Friedman script and you have to make it, you've gotta understand, this picture sucks! And it does. *THE DEFILERS* is really pathetic — but it did very well.

**SC:** That car crash at the beginning of *THE ANIMAL* — you just turned the camera upside down and sideways and had John Alderman simulate slow motion?

Frost: You got it! We poured chocolate syrup in his hair so it looked like blood, he bounced his head off the wheel a couple times —

**SC:** You did the same thing a few years later with the two girls in *CHROME AND HOT LEATHER* — a scene I always found disturbing — but it's even longer, bloodier, and more intense in *THE ANIMAL*.

Frost: It's also the cheapest way to do it. You have to remember, we made these pictures for a dollar and a donut.

**SC:** Were you influenced by the avant-garde films of the period?

Frost: No, I was only interested in what I was doing. Whatever it was I wanted to do in a film, I went out and did. I didn't know avant-garde, I didn't know what they were talking about, I didn't understand their actions —

**SC: THE ANIMAL looks like an experimental underground film.**

Frost: It seems to, but I don't know — that just happened, and I can't tell you how that happened. I guess I was in my dark mood then. (Laughs) I don't know what to tell you! The type of film I like, it's gotta have some laughs in it, it's gotta have good guys vs. bad guys, and the good guys always win and the bad guys always get hurt or go to jail. That's all I'm interested in. I'm sorry, but John Alderman had to die at the end of THE ANIMAL. I don't know why I killed him —

**SC: He's dead at the end?**

Frost: He gets killed in a car. He drives off a cliff.

**SC: So he's in hell when he's on the phone with his mother? He's been damned to hell?**

Frost: I didn't say 'damned to hell.' I don't know about 'damned' and I don't know about 'hell' — I'm not playing your word game here!

**SC: But if he's dead, then how —**

Frost: (interrupting) That has nothing to do with the film! The film is about a guy who's a sicko, he looks at a girl through a telescope and gets her entrapped so he can make love to her!

**SC: So he's alive at the end! He's in the hospital, he's paralyzed — his domineering mother is talking to him on the phone, remember? She says, "You're coming home to live with me, I'll take care of you..."**

Frost: His mother has to take care of him? That I don't remember.

**SC: Yeah, so he's alive. It's a figurative hell instead of a literal one.**

Frost: I got it now. His mother is hell. I like that — I'll have to shoot it someday! (Laughs) I don't recall the ending of the film, OK? I really don't.

**SC: I like it when Alderman takes the LSD, and this moody b&w thriller is suddenly in color.**

Frost: That's the only money I had for color film — enough for one reel.

**SC: It's pretty jarring, especially since the "roughies" were almost always shot in black-and-white.**

Frost: Yes, the gritty stuff was in black-and-white and the comedies were in color. Everyone was doing that, even the big movies. That's why 12 ANGRY MEN is in b&w and 12 HAPPY MEN is in color.

**SC: THE ANIMAL was a Cresse script?**

Frost: No, Cresse came in with the idea. He said, "Let's make a picture called THE ANIMAL. We'll put John Alderman in it, and he can look at a girl through a telescope." Based on that description, two or three lines, I wrote THE ANIMAL. I guess he's the one who inspired me to get into this avant-garde shit. Some of his titles were just too fuckin' crazy to believe. THE SCAVENGERS? MONDO BIZARRO? How about this one — MONDO FREUDO. These are weird stories that he stole from somebody else, gave to me, and I had to write scripts for them.

**SC: Whose idea was it to cast Cresse and Friedman as the two opposing crime bosses in THE PICK-UP?**

Frost: That was Wes Bishop's film, so he probably wanted to schmoose the boys. You have to get someone to talk and walk and chew gum and say the lines — why not get Dave and Bobby to do it? That was basically the attitude. If they can sell what they're doing, give them a hundred dollars and let them do it.

**SC: Why did you cut to those still photographs during the electrocution torture of the girl?**

Frost: I'll tell you why you see that. What am I going to do with those girls in the movie? Tell me. Come on, you tell me! Tell me!

**SC: Well, you have Wes Bishop hook her up —**

Frost: And he shocks her. Now that's over — but the scene's too short. I have to extend the scene. I can't go back and shoot more footage. No, I think I'm going to take stills, shoot 'em, and then I'm going to bang 'em back and forth, interspersing the stills with the footage. That way, I can take a sequence that runs one minute and draw it out to three minutes or four minutes. That's all I did. Now you're trying to accuse me of being avant-garde because I extended the scene! You motherfucker!

**SC: OK, then explain the unconventional way you presented the rape of Virginia Gordon in HOT SPUR.**

Frost: Refresh my memory please.

**SC: Carlo (James Arena) is raping Susan (Virginia Gordon), but what we are actually seeing is a flashback in which Susan's husband, Joseph (Joseph Mascolo), is raping Carlo's sister. To make the scene even more unsettling, Carlo — in voiceover — is reciting to Susan everything that Joseph said to Carlo's sister while he was raping her!**

Frost: What can I say? It seemed like the right thing to do at the time.

**SC: It's brilliant! Unfortunately, the resolution is a letdown. You unwisely went for a surprise ending instead of the logical conclusion.**

Frost: Which is — ?

**SC: You establish that Jason is upset with Susan for not giving him a son, and you establish that Jason hates Mexicans. The logical conclusion is this: After Carlo rapes Susan, Jason kills him, and Susan and Jason live happily ever after until nine months later, when she gives birth to a half-Mexican son.**

Frost: (burst of laughter)

**SC: No, think about it —**

Frost: (still laughing) Jesus, you are really pathetic! That's a really sick ending you've got there. You're sick!

**SC: Wait a minute — you made LOVE CAMP 7, and you're calling me sick?!**

Frost: (more laughter)

**SC: Earlier you mentioned some of the "mondo" documentaries that you and Cresse produced. HOLLY-**

**WOOD'S WORLD OF FLESH is probably the most entertaining of them, but the sheer contempt that MONDO BIZARRO has for its audience pushes that one to the top of the heap.**

Frost: What do you mean by that?



**SC: "To the worm in the cheese, the cheese is the universe. To the maggot in the cadaver, the cadaver is infinity. And to you — what is YOUR world?"**

Frost: (Burst of laughter) Did I write that?! Oh man, you're bringing my past back to me! I hate you, you shit! MONDO BIZARRO — that's the one with the Arab slave auction, right?

**SC: Yes, you dragged the camera with the long lens and the special microphone up the side of a mountain to film it.**

Frost: That was Bronson Canyon! (Laughs) We got a bunch of cars and put cardboard license plates on them. Cresse and all of our friends were playing the Arabs. A truck pulls in with 4 boxes in the back of it. There are little holes cut in each of the boxes. The driver gets out of the truck, breaks off pieces of bread, and you can see hands reach out of the boxes and take the bread. He's feeding the animals. Now the Arabs pull in. Six cars, seven cars, eight cars — all with cardboard license plates — and the Arabs get out in their robes and all that. The guy with the bread opens the boxes and naked girls are inside. That's our slave auction!

**SC: You also worked on the American version of ECCO.**

Frost: What happened with that one was, there were some guys in New York who had two films, a Japanese film and an Italian film, and they wanted to make them into a full movie. We took on the job, and I did all of the re-cutting. We released ECCO under Cresa Roma Films, and the first week or two we had it out in the market, it started to take off. We got a call from Sam Arkoff, we went to talk to him — he said, "I think we can release the film better than you can" — and he took it over. AIP released the film, and we made whatever we made on the deal.

**SC: Where was LOVE CAMP 7 filmed?**

Frost: Dave Friedman's place over on Cordova Street in downtown Los Angeles — on Film Row — in a big place he used for storage. He kept his one-sheets and his publicity stuff in there. We cleaned it out and I put up the set — just one set, and it had three walls. Move one wall out, move it back, slide another wall over, and that's how we did the office and the barracks. Outside was where the Nazi Jeep drove in, where the prisoners escape — all of that was one place.

**SC: How did audiences react to LOVE CAMP 7?**

Frost: I have no idea. I never concerned myself with any of that. I wasn't interested in what people thought of the films, I was just looking for another project — "Let's get another script, let's shoot again." If we made any money on it, fine. If we didn't, fine. I was never into the business end of it.

**SC: John Alderman, who's in LOVE CAMP 7, was a regular in late '60s and early '70s adults-only movies. What was he like to work with?**

Frost: Johnny was a good guy. He was just a wonderful, cooperative, sweet fellow. He did a lot of work for a lot of good people — he was a stock player for Dave Friedman, I know. TRADER HORNEE. His first film for





me was THE ANIMAL, but he also was in HOT SPUR and THE PICK-UP.

**SC: Thematically, THE SCAVENGERS is your most fully realized work. The motifs that run through your other films are all present, in the personification of the crazy Confederate Captain, played by Jonathan Bliss, whose twisted back-story guides the film to its ironic conclusion.**

Frost: What was his back-story again?

**SC: He was a plantation owner whose family was eaten by runaway slaves.** Frost: (Laughs) I don't recall that! (Laughs harder) Oh my God, that's terrible!

**SC: That's why he won't let his soldiers eat the horse at the beginning.**

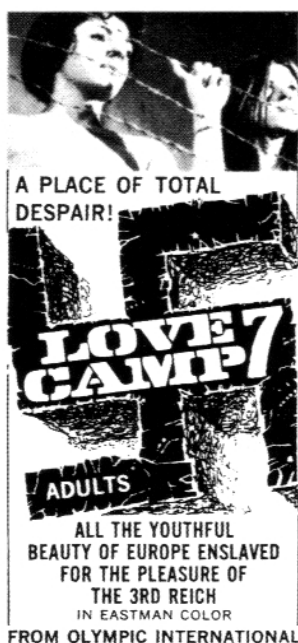
Frost: I recall that — "Don't eat your horse" — but I'll never remember the runaway slaves eating his family. My mind has totally blocked that whole part! (Laughs) And when the sheriff comes to get me, I'll deny it!

**SC: At the end, the Confederate captain falls off his horse and gets trapped under it.**

Frost: A horrible shot! Dumbest shot I've ever seen — the guy gets both legs stuck under the horse when it falls? We had a bunch of horses out there. The veterinarian knocked one out, it fell down, and we hauled it over to John Bliss, who had both legs in a hole we'd dug for him. He was complaining — "Oh, my legs hurt!" "Shut up! Just say the fuckin' lines so we can get out of here!"

**SC: The irony is that two of his own men leave him to the vultures at the end.**

Frost: Oh, there's another story — those vultures. The ones we used to not live in this country. Those vultures are from South-fuckin'-America. This guy had 7 vultures. Beautiful birds. He took them out and tethered them — drove stakes into the ground with rope, and that was gonna hold the birds. We were on a horse ranch — well, he pounded the stakes into cow manure! So we started shooting, and when John swung his saber at the bird, the bird looked at him, flapped its wings, pulled the stake out of the manure, and flew off toward the mountains! It wasn't high off the ground, and it was dragging the stake behind it, so the guy — the only wrangler we had on the picture — took off after it. "I gotta get my bird!" I said, "OK, let's shoot another one while he's off looking for his bird." We had a few other birds tethered, spread out around John and the drugged horse — but then another bird got free and flew straight at my assistant cameraman, Jim Shea. Now, the guy with the birds had told us, "Whatever you do, do not get near this bird. This bird has a jaw on it that will cut your hand right off. Don't do this, don't do that" — the speech went on 10 minutes about how dangerous these birds are. Jim, in a moment of passion, reached up and grabbed the stake, and the bird came down the rope upside down with its beak open, trying to bite his hand off! I screamed, "Let go of it!" Jim swung the rope around his head in a circle, with the bird stretched out at the end of it, flapping its wings. As long as Jim kept swinging that bird around, he figured that bird wouldn't eat his hand! (Laughs) Luckily, the wrangler came back — he had on a leather glove that went from his armpit down to his fingertips — and he grabbed the bird away from him.



**SC: Some great Cresse stories have been going around for years, thanks to Friedman and Harry Novak.**

Frost: I'm sure there are many stories going around about Bob. I never paid attention to him, I didn't care what he did. He got shot by a cop, I know that. He was walking down the street with his little badass dog, going to a dirty bookstore, and two guys were hassling some girl. She was screaming, "Help me, help me, help me!" Bob took out his gun and yelled, "Stop or I'll shoot!" They turned and blasted him — shot him right in the chest, and then they shot his dog and killed it. They were cops! They handcuffed him to the ambulance and left him to die. He never fully recovered from that incident.

**SC: Where were his infamous bodyguards when that happened?**

Frost: Those bodyguards were just for show. He was nothing but mouth — that's it, just one big mouth, talking and talking, showing off.

**SC: Did Cresse produce anything after THE SCAVENGERS?**

Frost: I don't think so. Olympic was out of business by then. I went over to AIP, and

the first thing I did for them was WITCHCRAFT '70, which was similar to what I'd done with ECCO. There was a batch of films AIP had purchased, and one of them was an English film they wanted to turn into a mondo-type exploitation movie. I shot three new sequences, we cut out all this other stuff, and made it into a reasonable movie. I'll tell you what we did — for example, they had people in Haiti talking about devil worshipping, and all these people were doing was walking around on a beach, playing with the waves, they had dolls floating in the water — I said, "There's nothing happening here, I've gotta fill up eight minutes of film!" So what I did was, I took the film, dragged it across the floor so it got all scratched up, and then I re-photographed it on my movieola — right on the movieola screen itself. It looked like a small, jumpy, cracked up, messy-looking piece of shit in there, but I re-photographed it and told the audience, "This film is captured film! This was shot by a guy who was out risking his life to make this picture! He was in serious trouble!" (Laughs) You can't even see what's going on, but that's how we sold it — and they bought it.

**SC: During the opening credits of CHAIN GANG WOMEN, there are visible splices before and after the title appears. That's not the original title, is it?**

Frost: No, that was Crown International's title. I think I just called it THE CHAIN. In the ad I made for it, I showed two feet chained together — one guy's right foot, and another guy's left foot pointing in the wrong direction. That's all you saw in the picture, but you had to conclude — if you looked at it closely enough — that these are two men and not just one guy standing there.

**SC: THE CHAIN was made right before you went to work for AIP?**

Frost: No. What happened was, I was doing some films with my other partner, Armand Atamian. We made a bunch of stupid little nothing movies — I was making pictures for

AIP at the time, but when I had a weekend off I'd say, "Let's make a movie." I had short ends, fifty pieces of film — "I'll take this camera out, I'll get a couple of lights and just make up something. I'll shoot these films in two days." Armand said, "What's it gonna cost?" I said, "It's gonna cost nothing! What are we talkin' — three thousand dollars? Five thousand dollars? Ten thousand dollars, tops." He said, "OK, let's do it." So I made about four of these, and then I made THE CHAIN.

**SC: ZERO IN AND SCREAM was one of those four movies?**

Frost: Yes, that was 2 days of short ends. It went out through a company called Phoenix International. That was a total throwaway to keep Armand busy. All I did was keep my friends busy. We'd shoot the film, I'd take all the camera stops out, splice 'em together, and that was the movie. I didn't edit, I just did it like that. I had a guy who was a musicians agent at the time, and he brought five guys in there, we sat them down in the screening room, they hooked up their instruments and I ran the movie. The guy said, "Well, what should we play?" I said, "Play anything you want. Play a song, play mood music, play a flute — whatever! Get hung up on what you're watching and let it direct you." I turned on the projector, turned on the microphone, recorded them, and that's how we did our scores. Wall-to-wall music.

**SC: Getting back to THE CHAIN...**

Frost: I got some guys together and we shot that, but then I got an AIP picture I had to do, which I think was CHROME and HOT LEATHER. So I put THE CHAIN on a shelf, didn't touch it for a year, and one day I'm watching it, and I said, "Y'know, this picture has merit. This can be something in the major market." My partner said, "I'll talk to Red Jacobs about it at Crown and see what happens." So I made a presentation for them. I ran a part of the picture and said, "Now we're going to shoot this, this, and this," and then I ran

another piece of the picture, did the same thing, and nobody understood what I was saying. They wouldn't do anything with it. I said to my partner, "Let's raise the money from somebody else." So we raised some more money, shot it, did all the stuff that you see in the picture — the chains, the guys fighting in the mountains, helicopter shots of the truck moving and all that — and then we finished it off with the old picture. We showed it to Crown, and they said, "Whoa, this is great!" and they took it. I said, "But that's what I was telling you — you assholes." (Laughs)

**SC: When you were writing scripts with Wes Bishop, how long would —**

Frost: (interrupting) I didn't write any scripts with Wes Bishop.

**SC: Really? He receives co-writer credit on at least eight of your movies.**

Frost: I know he does. I wrote the scripts, I gave them to him, he made corrections, and that was it. All he did was check my spelling. (mocking voice) He wants to be a writer!

**SC: So he was just the producer?**

Frost: That's all he was — and that was enough. (Laughs) Oh,



and he was an actor also. He had to be an actor.

**SC:** You've done your share of acting also. You play the heroic Union lieutenant in *THE SCAVENGERS*, the bad guy in *THE BLACK GESTAPO*, and you even turn up in a few films you didn't direct, like *SWEET JESUS PREACHER MAN*.

Frost: Yeah, my friend Dan Cady produced that, and it was directed by — I forgot his name...

**SC:** Henning Schellerup.

Frost: No, his partner — the big guy...

**SC:** John Hayes?

Frost: Yes, I believe he directed that one. Wait, did he do *SWEET JESUS PREACHER MAN* or...

**SC:** He directed *GARDEN OF THE DEAD*.

Frost: That's the one John Hayes directed. You're right, *SWEET JESUS PREACHER MAN* was done by Henning.

**SC:** Some references claim that John Hayes and Henning Schellerup are the same person.

Frost: (Laughs) No, they're two different people. I can guarantee that.

**SC:** Three writers are credited on *CHROME AND HOT LEATHER*, and you aren't one of them.

Frost: I got that after I did *WITCHCRAFT '70* for AIP. Sam sent me a script for a picture and said, "I want to know what you think of this." So I read it and I told him, "I think this is the worst piece of shit I've ever read." There were four Green Berets against a motorcycle gang, and the four Green Berets took these people and just murdered them. They wrapped them in barbed wire, they dragged them behind their bikes — this was one of the meanest things I've ever read. I said, "That's what it is, Sam. Thanks for thinking of me, but it's terrible." He said, "I agree. Why don't you fix it up and make it." I said, "OK!" (Laughs) That's all he told me — "Just fix it up and make it."

**SC:** How did Marvin Gaye get involved with that film?

Frost: His agency, I think it was William Morris, was looking for any movie he could be in. He wanted to be a movie star — that and a football player. I said, "Well, I can put him in a movie." And he was just like his songs — "Oh, what's goin' on?" (Laughs) He was a sweetheart of a guy. Always smiling. I think he was the nicest guy I've ever worked with. We had to teach him how to ride a bike, though. We were shooting in Piru, and there's a big wash out there, 500 or 600 yards wide. There's a bridge across this wash, so I took the camera down about 300 yards, set it up, and I was going to shoot the outlaw bikers coming across chasing my four Green Beret boys on bikes. Marvin was the last of the four in line. I said, "Let's do this, we're losing our light! It's the magic hour! ACTION!" They started going, and the bikes were going so slow, the choppers were falling over! The guys had to put their feet down because they were barely rolling! "CUT! What's the matter with you guys? Pick up the speed!" They got back to the start and did it again. They were going a little faster, but it still wasn't fast enough. I finally got the shot, I don't know how, but I talked to Bill Smith afterwards — "What was the problem?" He said, "Marvin was going so slow, we had to slow down because we didn't want to catch him, because then we'd have to run over him." I said, "What's the matter with Marvin?" Bill said, "He doesn't use his gears! He was only in first gear! You're lucky that bike is still running, 'cause he was just grinding it down to nothing!" (Laughs)

**SC:** Did you come up with the idea for *THE THING WITH TWO HEADS* yourself, or was that the story AIP gave you to work on?

Frost: They wanted a black man and a white man, their heads are sewn together on one body, and the white guy's a bigot. That's what they ordered.

**SC:** I think Ray Milland is terrific in *THE THING WITH TWO HEADS*, but I've read reviews that claim he looks embarrassed to be in the movie.

Frost: He wasn't embarrassed! He loved the movie! In fact, he went on *THE TONIGHT SHOW* with the head! I was there, too. I was behind the screen working the head — the head we had built, it had motors in it that worked the mouth. Joey Bishop was the guest host, and Ray said, "I've gotta tell you: this Lee Frost and this Wes Bishop are the greatest guys in the world, what a great movie they've made," and on and on and on. Joey Bishop was trying to get him to shut the fuck up and get on with the show, but Ray was saying, "No, no, let me tell you about these boys! What a great bunch of guys!" That's the way he was — a wonderful fellow, totally cooperative, knew every line. He was just a movie nut. I touted him to my friend Michael Klinger when he produced the picture *GOLD*. Klinger called me and asked, "What did you think of Milland?" I said, "Listen to me — HIRE HIM NOW. He did a beautiful job."



**SC:** In *POLICEWOMEN*, it looks like the women are doing their own stunts.

Frost: Yeah, they did them all. I don't think we had a stunt person on that picture.

**SC:** There's a scene where Sondra Currie climbs out of a speeding truck —

Frost: Well, the truck wasn't moving then. She was on a still truck, I was low on the angle — it's all cheating.

**SC:** When she jumps off the hood, yes — but when she climbs out of the cab, it's really her, and the truck looks like it's moving at a good clip.

Frost: I don't remember. I'll have to watch it again.

**SC:** Those fight scenes, with the girls throwing each other over tables — you don't see anything like that now.

Frost: Oh, I know you don't. You can't afford to do that anymore. You pay stuntmen to do it.

**SC:** I noticed that Maude's house in *POLICEWOMEN* is also the headquarters of the Black Gestapo.

Frost: Yes, that was our place. Wes and I had a house — it was a ranch — in Encino, California. He lived in the main house, and I had the guesthouse for an office. We had a garage back there, tennis courts, a swimming pool...

**SC:** How did you come up with the idea for *THE BLACK GESTAPO*?

Frost: Geez, I wish I could remember. I don't know how we came up with it. I just had to get a war between black people. So I had the good black people — the People's Army — and the bad black people, and the bad white guys, who were gangsters, and we combined it all and made it work somehow. I can't even remember putting a word on a piece of paper for that picture! But I did write it — me and Wes.

**SC:** Like many of your films, *THE BLACK GESTAPO* deals with race and class issues.

Frost: Let me tell you a story about that. I had about 30 black dudes show up one day. We had bought a bunch of khaki shirts and pants, and we had sewn various patches on them to make the Black Gestapo uniforms. We dyed the uniforms black, got the guys some bloused boots and red berets, put all the junk on their shirts, and they looked like pretty damn good soldiers. The only problem was, not one of them knew how to march. I said, "OK, I'm gonna teach you how to march." I used to be a drill instructor when I was in the Army. "Left foot when I say 'Left,' right foot..." and I marched them up and down that walkway. There was a guy next door to us who worked for Universal Pictures, a high mucky-muck, and his wife was looking out the window — "Jack, there's a man outside with a bunch of niggers! He's drilling them, they're marching around..." The guy said, "No dear, they're just making a movie. It's OK." (Laughs) But those guys who played the Black Gestapo, they were great. They worked hard, they did their own stunts — it turned out well.

**SC:** Who is Phil Hoover? He's in almost all of your movies, and he even pops up in *SWEET JESUS PREACHER MAN* and *GARDEN OF THE DEAD*...

Frost: Phil was one of our best guys. He worked with us on the ranch, he was there every day, and we made him an actor. He was a football player for USC. He's one of the gangsters in *THE BLACK GESTAPO*, he's Maude's husband in *POLICEWOMEN* — I couldn't imagine doing a film without him. He's a good guy, hard working, and he's there whenever you need him.

**SC:** Were you originally supposed to direct *RACE WITH THE DEVIL*?

Frost: No, I was just the writer — me and Wes. Jack Starrett, as far as I know, was set to direct from the very beginning. The reason *RACE WITH THE DEVIL* happened was, after the film with the guys in the boat — what was it called?

**SC:** *DELIVERANCE*.

Frost: Right! I saw *DELIVERANCE* and I was very impressed. I loved that movie. So I was driving in the car one day and I thought, "I've gotta do something like that — people who are out in the open, experiencing freedom, and yet they're trapped. I've gotta find a way to get them in something." And I was right behind a motor home. "That's it!" I said. "They're in a motor home, going from point A to point B, and the bad guys try to catch them!" That was it. I sat down and wrote something called *SO MOTE IT BE*, which became *RACE WITH THE DEVIL*.

**SC:** How long does it take you to write a screenplay?

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# FILM FLOT SAM

## READERS' REVIEWS

GERARD ALEXANDER; Sydney, Australia.

**ALASKA.DE (2000).** Writer/Director Esther Gronen-born delivers your bleakness supplements in buckets with this story of Berlin teenagers looking for a reason to go on living. Sabine (Jana Pallaske) arrives at Andy Warhol Strasse looking for her dad's apartment, as she's been told to move out by her mum, so her new partner can have more space. Eddie (Frank Droese) lives near the City Pipeline, nicknamed Alaska, where he awaits his next joint, his next beer or his pitbull's next fight. He meets Sabine and his buddies tease him for his interest in such a hick chick. Micha (Toni Blume) has just gotten out of Juvenile detention on Parole. As he has turned 18, any further offenses will find him in an adult prison. Eddie and Micha hang out at the same pool hall and share some friends. One afternoon, Micha gets into a bad scrape with a smart aleck, and Eddie stabs the guy in the back. Micha finishes the job by putting the boot in. Sabine had been watching from across the street. Her curiosity leads her to drop her Biology book onto the corpse. As the Police investigations turn up the heat, Sabine must decide whether to fink on the only friend she has in this new town. Micha's drug dealing pursuits also threaten to end in disaster. There is an underlying tension whenever characters try to communicate that lends the uniformly fine performers an added credibility. The barren, sooty landscape also enhances the impression that there is nothing new for these people to aspire to. Only the inclusion of some by-the-number pop/grunge numbers threatens the stability of this opaque vision. A first time director to look out for indeed.

**NAKER (2001).** This torrid Thai epic directed by Fai Sam Ang will appeal to those that appreciate the more, ahem, florid side of cinema. It's a melodrama of Douglas Sirk proportions with a script worthy of Andy Milligan. The lead, played by sultry Pich Chamboramey, doesn't even appear until almost an hour into the film. But what a film! Nhi and Manop are poor farmers living off the land in rural Cambodia. Manop is so depressed at his bead selling business that he frequently turns to alcohol for relief. His wife Nhi is left alone when Manop has to sell his wares in the city, and she spends her time with her young daughter Ed, growing vegetables. One afternoon however, Nhi has her eyes hit by light rays fired by a snake. The snake leaves and she forgets she ever came into contact with it. In the city, wealthy lady of the house Buppha is pregnant. Her sister is jealous and goes to a witch who gives her a pearl to make her pregnant too. Meanwhile, Nhi loses a spade in a deep hole and the snake re-appears. He asks her to be his wife and bear his daughter. She agrees!! At night, the snake slides into her bed and zaps her once more, as she makes love to it in human form. Ed worries about what Manop would think if he knew about what mum had been up to. In the city again, Buppha dies giving birth to her son, Vaha. Her sister is overjoyed. Manop returns home and finds out about his wife's affair with a snake. He waits for her to show her pregnancy before killing her and the many snakes that spill from her belly. But one survives and is raised as the beautiful Soraya, by a monk. Soraya has snakes in her hair which she can conceal. When she saves Vaha's life, love blooms. But the family does not approve. Is this the beginning of the category to be known as Snake Operas? Only the Far East will tell...

**SUMMERFIELD (1977).** Nick Tate (SPACE: 1999) is primary school teacher Simon Robinson in this moody Australian thriller shot on Phillip Island. Director Ken Hannam (SUNDAY TOO FAR AWAY) and scriptwriter Cliff Green (PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK) play some major mind games with the characters and the audience in this sadly forgotten 90 minute puzzle. Simon arrives at this rural community to replace Peter Flynn, who has been missing for some weeks. He meets Sally Abbott, a lonely little girl who lives on an island with her mum, Jenny, and her uncle,

David. Staying at a guest house run by the local cop, Simon finds Peter Flynn's clothes in the bottom of his cupboard, as well as some photos depicting the local wildlife. After injuring Sally in a motor accident, Simon discovers that her family was close friends of Peter Flynn. David Abbott doesn't want Simon's sympathy and tries to dissuade him from seeing his sister Jenny, who is single. Elizabeth Alexander plays Jenny as something of a lost soul, unable to seek happiness in her life. As Simon finds more clues as to the whereabouts of Peter Flynn, an even more grotesque discovery leads to a devastating climax. The coda also gives one much to reflect upon. Nick Tate nicely underplays, making his character that much more authentic. Michelle Jarman, who plays Sally, avoids the usual cuteness one associates with young children. John Waters, an actor more well known in Australia for hosting the kid's show PLAY SCHOOL, portrays David Abbott with slight strokes, leading a viewer into doubting his true intentions until the end. A macabre piece of work for those willing to spend the time on it.



TOM FITZGERALD; Los Angeles, CA.

**F.T.A. (Shocking Videos; 1972).** In today's flag-waving climate, just watching this long-suppressed, anti-Vietnam war documentary will make you feel like you're committing a treasonous act. Lead by America's favorite traitor "Hanoi Jane" Fonda, Donald Sutherland and various folkies, F.T.A. (alternately Fuck or Free the Army) was a "political vaudeville" revue that performed outside U.S. army bases in the Pacific Rim to rally discontented soldiers. Their shows were a limp mix of Marxism and the Marx Brothers, full of cornball gags and lame song parodies targeted at military brass. The film closes with Sutherland, clenched fist in the air, bluntly calling for worldwide insurrection. A curio truly of its time, an era when pop stars followed the trail blazed by John and Yoko and hopped on the "radical chic" bandwagon. More often than not, history has proven them to be hypocritical fools. Is Fonda hoping to aerobicize the oppressed of the Third World to freedom? Mutiny. Armed revolt. Nixon's enemies list. Did they understand what serious shit they were monkeying around with? On the other hand, there's no b.s. when we hear from the dissenting enlisted men themselves. What they have to say is quite compelling as they knew just how fucking obscene the war was. The testimonials from black G.I.'s are especially intense, as they had to contend with racism in the ranks while trying to stay one step ahead of "Charlie." In fact, the war had radicalized them, believing the real enemy wasn't the Viet Cong, but Uncle Sam. Other seditious moments include an encounter with crippled homeless vets wandering aimlessly around Japan and a tour of the ghettos that border U.S. military installations in the Philippines. Shanty towns lined with scummy massage parlors and grimy gin joints all operating exclusively for the gratification of the imperialist dogs. AIP pulled this propagandistic hot potato after only one week in theaters and "Hanoi Jane" has kept this skeleton-in-her-closet out of public view ever since.

**TRICIA'S WEDDING (1971) and ELEVATOR GIRLS**

**IN BONDAGE (1972).** It's high time we check out the gonzo cinema of the Cockettes, San Francisco's legendary acid drag queen theatre troupe. Overdosing on old Hollywood camp and joyously reveling in drug-fueled sexual anarchy, the group gained a cult following with their flamboyant free form hippie happenings. Hatched from this omnisexual universe of trannies, junkies, kooks and perverts, their celluloid pageants were the home movies of every "silent majority" parent's worst nightmare. These no-budget wonders from under the underground were labors of love, something to amuse themselves and their family of fans...Dedicated to fellow glamentia goddess Divine, TRICIA'S WEDDING was the group's riotous spoof of the much-hyped Nixon White House event. Filmed in anticipation of the nuptials, it

premiered the day of the real ceremony. While Tricky Dick fondles his beloved "Presidential Teddy" (a guy in a bear suit), the Nixons go over the guest list for their daughter's big day. From the Pope to Phyllis Diller, they invite everybody who's anybody. The service goes smoothly as the bride takes "this pig-sticking, cunt-licker" as her lawfully wedded husband. The gala reception is another story. First, Lady Bird crashes the party and brings the cornpone, as if she walked right out of a "Li'l Abner" comic. Then, a drunk-off-her-ass Mamie Eisenhower tumbles into the wedding cake. But when Eartha Kitt spikes the punch bowl with LSD all hell breaks loose. Queen Elizabeth, Jackie O., Billy Graham et al blast off in a gloriously loony freak out. They scream, strip, cry, cavort and grope in a writhing mass of ripped thrift store costumes and tattered fright wigs. Among the trashed cardboard set, Tricia gets fucked with a baseball bat while Eartha strangles the first lady and the prez soul



kisses a guy. Needless to say, the actual soiree went a tad differently. With their muttonchops and clownish cosmetics, none of the players really bare a likeness to who they're impersonating, but that's only fitting in this bizarre world rendition of the first family's embalmed zombie parade...Next up's the angel dust-addled epic *ELEVATOR GIRLS IN BONDAGE*. This time the misbehavior's set in a flea bag hotel in San Francisco's seedy Tenderloin district. Wandering around this debauched flophouse you might find the 6' 3" bearded lass "Patsy" or maybe the cigarette girl who offers french ticklers and douche bags. The perpetually zonked Rumi stars as Maxine, the den mother of the hotel's under-the-influence elevator girls. They're at the service of

lodgers like a weirdo who dines on birdseed and washes it down with a champagne and Cream of Wheat cocktail. Mmmmm. But life isn't all stocking-sniffing and spanish fly slumber parties for these gals. The hotel's wicked landlady only pays 75c a day and ignores their pleas for security. When the resident obscene phone caller rapes one of 'em, they're fed up. Maxine unionizes these damsels in distress as the "Pussy Protection Club." "We clean up the shit! Why don't we have diet caviar?" she declares to her catatonic comrades. Just then, a G-man bursts in on these "anti-American creeps" and shoves his gun up their asses. What are they gonna do now? What any sensible person would do. They rape the obscene phone caller! Brandishing a dildo, they stroke him, blow him, and screw him 'til he comes like a geyser, Elmer's glue spattering everywhere. During a Cockettes extravaganza at the hotel's nightclub, Maxine climbs on stage demanding "freedom from the bourgeois pigs" as the girls plan to blow up the joint. A riot ensues and Maxine's incarcerated. But suddenly, none of this matters! A fake lizard in a tux and a real one in a top hat climb over a toy model of the Golden Gate Bridge, attack the hotel and kill the landlady. Although it's as bizarre as any film you'll see, what's most surprising is that underneath the mothball threads and glittered facial hair, this is in fact an agit-prop saga of "freak power" fighting the Man. Everything about the production is consistently more than a little off, giving the whole undertaking an otherworldly quality. Especially the dubbed dialogue which is as disjointed as the most threadbare kung fu flick. The skewed editing includes alternate takes of the same scene popping up at random. The cast acts like they're on a steady diet of cough syrup and tuinals because most likely they were. Out of sync and out of its head, this transmission from the Planet Quaalude is prescribed for those who find early John Waters too polished. Bon appetite.

**MEMORIA [Las Bestias No Se Miran Al Espejo, a.k.a. The Beasts Do Not Watch The Mirror] (1974).** One of the few Spanish head films, this "Technofantasy Production" was the only live action feature by the late animator Francisco Macián, previously known for cartoons based on Hans Christian Andersen and the Bible. Here, he serves up odd, ambitious sci-fi surrealism that at times resembles a Kenneth Anger version of *ALTERED STATES*. In the near future, a doctor at "The International Institute of Neurophysiology" is seeking to uncover "la memoria," the primitive natural instincts buried in the collective unconscious. Part of the good doctor's research evidently includes squashing mice in his beefy fist and setting his hair on fire. Eventually, he infuses a blue liquid containing his lustful and jealous id into a decrepit research cadaver. Jolted back to life, it impulsively rapes and kills the doc's foxy wife then attacks her hunky lover. At this point, the film dissolves into pure lysergic symbolism whose significance is anybody's guess. I mean, what can one make of the phantasmagoria that follows? The grotesque guinea pig falls into the ocean awakening a boat load of other id-injected zombies (mute, bald, scrawny, and bare-assed, they look like a cross between Japanese butoh dancers and a skid row mime troupe). Upon seeing him, they mutate into gargoyles and drop dead. The last one to die steers their vessel full steam into the rocky shore unleashing a kaleidoscopic montage. A screaming simian. Explosions. Flames. Hippies. Demons. Sinister monks enacting a funeral rite. And finally, by the order of a Roman emperor, the doc is shot by a firing squad. In the enigmatic epilogue, a naked child finds a human eyeball on the beach. I'm telling you this is prime time dementia! In depict-

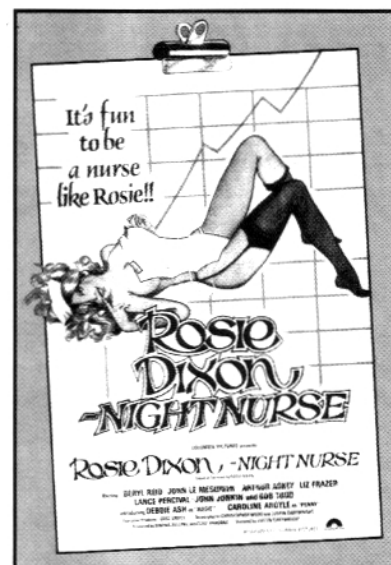
ing the inner world of "la memoria," Macián hits us with an arsenal of mind-altering means. Pulsating blobs of color, op art, flash frames, solarization, superimpositions, and microscopic photography. Add the sparse, spectral score by composer Stelvio Cipriani and watch out! Such a psychoactive fireworks display could trigger a flashback. Even if I understood the Spanish dialogue, I suspect this well-crafted obscurity still wouldn't make much sense. But what do you want from a head film?

**KANASHIMI NO BELLADONNA [Belladonna Of Sadness] (1973).** Even if you're like me and don't really take to Japanese anime, I would still without hesitation recommend Eiichi Yamamoto's ravishing, hallucinogenic animated fable. In a rural French province during the Middle Ages, Janne and Jean ask the King for permission to marry. But they're unable to pay the marriage tax and his Majesty brutally deflowers the chaste Janne. Back at the village, her success as a seamstress leads to suspicion's that she's a witch. Persecuted, she flees into the forest and prays to be wealthy and wed. But it's Old Scratch, not God, who answers by promising to help her if she gives up her virginity. After making her deal with the Devil, she casts a libidinous spell over the peasants. Threatened by her growing influence, the royals burn her at the stake. By reinterpreting the perennial witch hunt story, Yamamoto allegorically alludes to women's lib, revolution and sexual liberation. The pic's action flows fluidly from one extraordinary, poetic composition to another. Flowers form into vaginas. Open wounds take flight like blood red bats. Janne's metamorphosis into a sorceress leads a jolting pop art interlude. In these few furious seconds, earth's evolution unravels in reverse from the absurd circus of modern life (TV, sky scrapers, body builders, junk food) to the Renaissance to ancient Egypt to the Big Bang. Imagine an Electric Company cartoon shot up with STP. When she bewitches the villagers, a blasphemous and bestial bacchanal commences. A giraffe's head rises from a fellow's crotch. Dogs fuck mermaids. Folks shit fish, drink baby piss and tear open their own bellies. Wow! The style softens during the quieter, bucolic scenes with watercolor-based textures that bring to mind packaging for a '70s feminine hygiene product. Jazz keyboardist Masahiko Satoh's outstanding psychedelic funk fusion soundtrack propels this remarkable cinematic mosaic.

**KIM NEWMAN; London, England.**

**ROSIE DIXON, NIGHT NURSE (1978).** By 1978, the British sex comedy 'boom' was in its very last gasp, and this attempt at launching a CONFESSIONS-style film series — crafted exactly to mimic the original by CONFESSIONS-writer Christopher Wood, from a paperback series along the lines of the Timmy Lea books — went nowhere, despite embarrassing a large selection of fine British professional comic character actors and providing an early skeleton-in-closet credit for a few players (Leslie Ash, Patricia Hodge) who have prospered. It may also be that the CONFESSIONS format just didn't work with a female lead, and there's a strange disjunction between the jolly rogering and the usual skewed morals of the British sex film. Debbie Ash's bubbly blonde student nurse, who gets into the profession because she's a fan of TV's 'Dr. Kilmore' and wants to ditch her bespectacled ginger accountant boyfriend for a more appealing doctor, is sort of a likable presence but the script can't decide whether she's a modest, nice innocent or a randy slut — she preserves her virginity despite the assaults of several young doctors mostly by farcical accident only to get it together with nice Peter Mantle at the end. Beryl Reid does a Scots accent, John le Mesurier does absent-minded arrogance, Harry Towh accidentally drinks a urine sample, Peter Bull double-takes, Bob Todd malingers, Arthur Askey pinches bottoms and Lance Percival has a fourteen-inch penis, while John Junkin and Liz Fraser are Rosie's parents, with nymphet Leslie Ash cast as the younger sister. There are some *ANIMAL HOUSE* bits with a rival hospital, including a splashy knockabout fight-orgy in the showers after a rugby match, and the usual non-sexual nudity in showers and during underwear-changing sessions, though Caroline Argyle nakedly straddles a patient swathed in plaster and trapped in traction ('he was a pooft too', she later says, after being fired) and the Irish doctor (Ian Sharp) has an amazingly offensive bit when his sex drug is accidentally taken by the uptight black nurse and he flees from her as if from Hattie Jacques. Not funny, not sexy, but horridly fascinating.

**ASYLUM [a.k.a. The Final Commission] (2000).** The sort of frame-breaking weirdness British film and TV culture needs if it's to evolve, but is never really going to love. It has a nested box series of frames: in a 'post-viral' future (the virus was incubated in bad television), snippets of film from a reputedly abandoned documentary, 'The Perimeter Fence', are assembled and addressed. A collaboration between Chris Petit (*RADIO ON, AN UNSUITABLE JOB FOR A WOMAN*) and novelist Iain Sinclair (*DOWNRIVER, RADON DAUGHTERS*), building on their previous





work and interests, it takes a certain Burroughs-Cronenberg-Ballard approach but ventures a little outside their territory to cope with different figures, most notably Michael Moorcock (who is visited in Bastrop, Texas) and the ranting poet Ed Dorn (to whom the film is dedicated), not to mention bits of James Sallis (who plays the guitar), David Seabrook and Marina Warner (who deconstructs fairy tales). Meanwhile, the film's real-life editor Emma Matthews tries to track down the vanished Francoise Lacroix, who turns out to be doubled by her twin Michelle. Sinclair evokes Nigel Kneale's theory of THE STONE TAPE, and the soundtrack makes use of the voices of the stone. Comics artist Dave McKean treats the footage and a few narrative strands are teased if not unraveled. Guaranteed to get unwary viewers phoning up to complain, but important nevertheless.

#### VINCENT CONSERVA; Garden City, NY.

**SNATCHED (1972).** Any genre film fan who grew up in the '70s has fond memories of the Movie Of The Week. Usually filling up a 90 minute time-slot, these little flicks were basically exploitation fare for the boob-tube. Almost always treated with indifference by critics, some actually managed to build up some suspense. **SNATCHED** is one of them...Our tale begins at a posh tennis club where three wealthy business partners (John Saxon, Howard Duff and Leslie Nielsen) are enjoyed some time off. After some male bonding, the boys meet up with the wives (Barbara Parkins, Tisha Sterling and Sheree North) who are about to leave in a limo for a shopping spree. Little do they know, an extremely greasy Jake (Anthony Zerbe) has killed the real driver and taken his place (meanwhile, the real brains behind the outfit remains a mystery until the last reel). The girls fall right into the trap, er, limo, and are whisked away to a guarded lighthouse. Jake has his rapist cousin Whit and giant mute lackey Cheech keep watch while he sends ransom messages to the husbands via pre-recorded tapes. Back at the lighthouse, Whit breathes heavy, tries a little rape, and sings "Three Blind Mice" repeatedly! If the men want to see their wives alive and in one piece, they must deliver three million dollars to a location chosen by the Mystery Man abductor. Even though they're told not to involve the police, Saxon calls on an old friend who's now a detective (played by a pre-afro'd Robert Reed). There's only one problem: Duff refuses to pay his third of the ransom, and claims that Sterling has been cheating on him with "beach bums"! Now he won't have to go through the expense of a divorce! Plenty of arguing takes place before the kidnappers bounce Saxon all over the California coast with the dough, leading to a double twist ending. The entertaining picture has some genuine suspense, director Sutton Roley gives the production a theatrical flair, and it also features a killer cast, thanks to the deep pockets of producers Aaron Spelling and Leonard Goldberg. In addition, Tisha Sterling watchers will be in heaven, as she screams, cries, whines, begs, and even catfights! For fans of the old school "M.O.T.W.", this is a must!

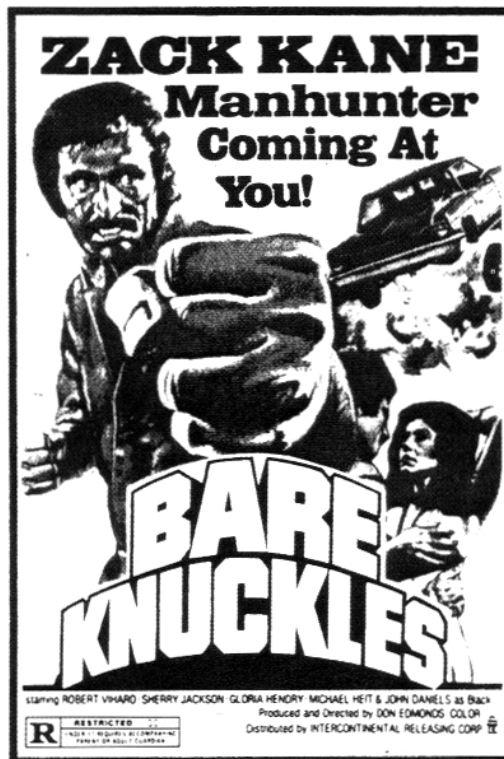
**THE INTERNECINE PROJECT (1974).** Through the mid-'60s to the early-'80s, James Coburn was one of Hollywood's top leading men, and the sheer volume of his work in action films and thrillers is mind-blowing. The man is a legend. One thing that separates Coburn from the pack (McQueen, Eastwood, etc.) is the fact he'd take on villainous roles as well as the hero type. Not just darker shadings, but downright bad guys. With **INTERNECINE**, he had the opportunity to play a very cool and calculating snake, and does it very well indeed. Coburn plays economics expert

Professor Robert Elliott, who's actually a spy. While stationed in the UK, he's informed by his superior (Keenan Wynn) that he is up for a promotion because of his excellent work on behalf of the White House. There's only one hitch: The four operatives working for Elliott must be eliminated to prevent any future indiscretion. At first, our Prof isn't receptive to four murders, but quickly decides that a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do. This is when the picture really kicks into gear, with an elaborate plan of domino effect murders. The Prof's plan is to have all four operatives kill each other off — but to give away details of the murders would spoil the fun. Watching Coburn man his 'Murder Machine' via telephone from his posh lair is most entertaining, with potential victims including a high class hooker (Christine Kruger), the government inventor (Michael Jayston), the diabetic mole (Ian Hendry), and my personal favorite, Bort (Harry Andrews), the woman-hating massage therapist. Bort says things like "They're all whores" and "unclean." All of these characters have been turning over valuable info to Elliott and know too much for their own good. Also thrown into the mix is Lee Grant as the Prof's old flame, a journalist who asks a lot of questions. We even get some James Bond-like gadgets, such as a "sonic box" that blows ear drums out. Roy Budd supplies an ominous score that accents the tensions; it's well directed by Ken Hughes, with not one frame wasted; and there are great performances from top to bottom. There's no blood, no nudity, no cursing even — yet this picture thrills and chills, which is something today's overblown multiplex sagas rarely accomplish.

**SAVAGE HARVEST (1981).** This nature run amok flick somehow managed to remain an enigma to this writer for 20 years. Quite a feat considering my love for "beastie" movies...It opens with a prologue that explains the problems of constant drought in the area of Nairobi, Africa — and that the film is based on actual events. Tom Skerritt (hot off the success of **ALIEN**) is the divorced father of a son and daughter in what appears to be '70s Africa. He works as a guide, while his ex-wife (Michelle Phillips) has remarried and taken their children to live on a sprawling farm. Staying with the family is stepdad's niece (PROM NIGHT's Anne-Marie Martin), who's a rock 'n' roll rebel. Barely into the first reel, we learn that lions have no problem tearing a van apart when they're hungry, and a Doctor trying to warn the family learns this lesson the hard way. No rain equals no grass, no grass means no small critters, no small critters equates to hungry lions, and a lot of them! The film is basically the never-ending siege of these bwana devils on the family's compound. The radio is out and it's up to absentee dad Skerritt to save the day! A nice surprise is the realistic way the family acts from start to finish — no forced humor or stupid behavior, just scared to death and trying to survive. But as scary as the attacks on the estate are, nothing will prepare you for Tom warbling "All You Need is Love," while trying to lift the morale of the troops! On a final note, the 'PG' rating is insane. There's the sight of human flesh being cleanly ripped from live bodies, with no cutaway shots. What were the censors thinking? This is one nasty movie, well told by director Robert Collins, who never lets the pace drag.

#### JOSH GRAY; Oakland, CA.

**BARE KNUCKLES (1977).** Cop show vet Robert Viharo plays bounty hunter Zachary Kane ("...as in blind man's") in this late-'70s action B-rump directed by Don Edmonds (ILSA). There's a psycho killer on the streets, a \$15K reward posted for his capture, and Zack's gonna collect. Gloria Hendry (**BLACK BELT JONES**) plays the pathetic and paranoid Barbara Darrow, a witness to the masked killer's street-light crime. Scared for her life (she knows the killer's identity! = Richard Devlin, a socialite/playboy), she disappears. Enlisting the help of ol' bounty huntin' bud, Black (John Daniels of **BLACK SHAMPOO** and **THE CANDY TANGERINE MAN**), the two tussle with patrons at a gay bar, and escape near-death at the hands of a surly black militia in their search for Barbara Darrow (whom they learn the killer's identity from). Meanwhile, the knife-wielding murderer a/k/a Richard Devlin (Michael Heit) is busy studying martial arts with sidekick Kido (Jace Chan), resisting his Oedipian urges for his portly, promiscuous mother (Karen Kondon), and hissing like a cat as he dons his leather mask and continues to kill topless babes. Zack's love interest, Jennifer Randall (a lovely Sherry Jackson), is able to get them invited to the Devlin's party. This does nothing but help Richard identify Zack's main squeeze, whom he murders after discovering Zack returning to the Devlin's to (quite unsuccessfully!) collect his suspect. Pissed-off, Zack is now determined to reap revenge. A particularly enjoyable, and exhaustive chase scene results; Devlin on a motorcycle, and Zack in his hotrod, through alleys and semi-crowded intersections, ending in the familiar backdrop of an LA flood channel. On foot, the two fight a la bare knuckles, jump train cars, and well, alas the end. Michael Heit's performance as the deranged, upper-class white kid killer stands out amongst the cast. Kudos to the photographer, Dean Cundey, for the excellent scene with Richard interrogating Jennifer framed through intense poolball juggling and a fun montage of Zack combing the LA streets. Former Richard Nixon campaign songwriter (NIXON'S THE ONE) — Vic Caesar's hard funk soundtrack also stands out as a highlight.



**THE SPOOK WHO SAT BY THE DOOR (1973).** You might think it's a shame that one of the best blaxploitation-era films (and at that, maybe one of the best African-American films) saw only a one-week release before it was pulled from theaters. But, with some perspective forced upon us in recent months, you might be relieved that this terrorist's cookbook on celluloid never reached its intended audience. Based on Sam Greenlee's infamous book, by the same name, *THE SPOOK* is an chilling tribute to the "token black" directed by Ivan Dixon (*TROUBLE MAN*, *GET CHRISTIE LOVE*). After passing a barrage of tests designed for a zero-pass rate, Dan Freeman (Lawrence Cook of *LORD SHANGO*) becomes the C.I.A.'s first black employee. After extensive C.I.A. training (great montage) is undergone and accomplished, Freeman is appointed to meaningless jobs in the copy room and as a C.I.A. HQ tour-guide. Frustrated with his lack of career advancement, yet now skilled in the mischievous arts of CIA tactics, he eventually takes his political agenda to the streets. Freeman's insistence that "This is not about hating white folks. This is about loving freedom enough to fight and die for it," will rally sympathy from us all. In his grandiose plan, he goes beyond the usual myopic solutions, as he trains cadres of black soldiers in guerrilla warfare for several successful bank and armory robberies. Now, well-armed and bank-rolled, they start full-scale, country-wide race riots, and it gets scary! There are moments of "black"-humor: a stripped National Guardsman fed LSD and sent into the streets, a white man claiming to be a "nigger", and musings on degrees of drug-addiction. Freeman's personal life is given some interesting screen-time which adds to a brilliant performance by Cook as the aloof mastermind. Perhaps if the ending was more apologetic, this would have managed to stay in the theaters. It'll make you wonder whether *FIGHT CLUB* creators found some inspiration here. The impressive score was composed by Herbie Hancock, though an official commercial release saw the same fate as the film.

**ANNA PUCHALSKI; Jersey City, NJ.**

**ASTERIX AND OBELIX VERSUS CAESAR (Video Junkie; 1999).** When I was about 10-years-old I loved the Asterix books. While my stuffier peers devoured Tintin I saved my pocket money for the Gauls. Even today I am somewhat skeptical of people who prefer that nosy, bald, little boy scout and his dog to the far superior Asterix. This French adaptation starts much the same as any of the books, with a battalion of Roman soldiers on the march, with a plan to crush Britannia — which isn't such a difficult task except for one, little, "un-sackable" Gaulish village. For the European-History-Deprived (or if you haven't read the books) the Gauls were the Pagan, somewhat Viking-like, inhabitants of France before the age of Christianity. Through the gossiping of these Roman attackers we hear the basic history of this village and their "Magic Potion" which makes them invincible. General Detritus (Roberto Benigni) forms a plan to capture a Gaul and use the potion to become the next Caesar. This is how we meet the title characters and the goofy action commences post-haste. Though repeatedly foiled in his attempts, Detritus tries plan after plan, and surprisingly enough, Benigni is not as obnoxious as you might imagine. Detritus in the books is a bit "fruity" and while Benigni still sports violet velvet togas and the fluffiest feathered helmet in the Roman army, his performance is relatively straightforward. Likewise Christian Clavier (*LE VISITEURS*) as Asterix is toned down in comparison to both the source material and past roles. This may be due to the fact that hero Asterix is often the voice of reason in his village where the people are nearly as stupid as the Romans. Gerard Depardieu is actually an apt choice for Obelix, although it is a little sad to see his saggy chest flopping above his artificial stomach, especially during the slo-mo scenes. As with the books, the funniest jokes are simply the names. Some are obvious like Geriatrix and Methusalix, some strange like Fullyautomatix the Blacksmith, others just slightly dirty like Parafanalix (she's stacked), or weird like Tunabrix the Chief, while my favorite is (of course) Dogmatix. The CGI is limited and actually well used with the exception of a few of the potion-face-morphs that are more grotesque than funny. But all the flying Legionnaires and the elephant toss are well done. In the end, this isn't an eyesore like *THE FLINTSTONES* movie, but it's no *ADDAMS FAMILY* either. It stays in the spirit of the books enough not to piss off fans, but if you are not familiar with the Asterix books, you may wonder what the fuss is about.

**THE MANSION OF THE GHOST CAT [Borei-Kaibyō Yashiki] (1958).** Director Nobuo Nakagawa (*JIGOKU*) takes a basic haunted house yarn and gives it a stylish twist. The film opens in black and white in a "modern day" hospital. We follow a flashlight beam through its darkened, eerie halls into a laboratory where we meet Dr. Tesuichiro. As he tells of his feelings of dread and the origins of his horror, the picture fades to the events of six years previous. Tesuichiro and his tuberculosis-stricken wife, Yorishko, are moving to a remote seaside town to convalesce. Her brother has found them a large building that they plan to use as a residence/clinic.

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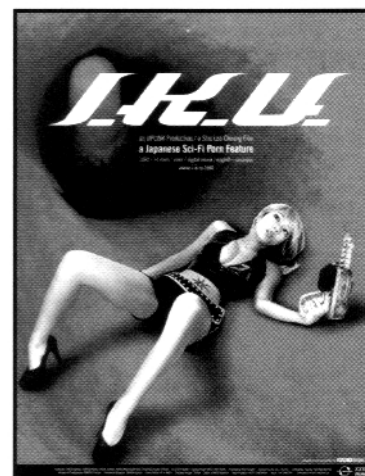
From the start the place seems ominous, there are "bad omens", false scares, yowling cats, and its history of being haunted. They clean the place up and move in but Yorishko is immediately plagued by visions and dreams of a phantom hag and being bitten by cats. At last her brother and Tesuichiro go to see a local monk who proclaims Yorishko's attacks the "cat-spirit's revenge" and we are taken back in time a few hundred years (and in full color, no less) for the story. This section could be a whole other film in itself! Plus it carries a whole new cast of characters; a pompous Lord who chases his servants around with a sword; kind samurai Kokingo and his blind mother, who treat their cat like a child; The Lord's mother, son, and the son's lover...all in glorious Feudal-era costume. But things get bad when the Lord kills Kokingo over a board game. His blind mother sees him in a vision as a corpse and goes to confront the Lord — who molests her!! She goes home and commits suicide, pledging her cat to avenge both her and her son. Suddenly the Lord's home is plagued by large blood stains, raining game pieces and mewling kitties. His mother is possessed and turns into a zombie-cat-demon which leads to some really impressive, cinematic fight scenes (think *BRIDE WITH WHITE HAIR*, thirty years before it was made). All of this paranormal activity comes to a bloody conclusion and we return to present day for a somewhat predictable wrap up. Of course, it is Nobuo's excellent visual sense and clever editing that separate this film from its western counterparts. In the genre of '50s horror films it stands apart, and not just because of the cultural differences. A lighter, less symbolic film than *JIGOKU*, but just as interesting.

**JAMES MULLINGER; London, England.**

**LOVE ME DEADLY (1972).** Mary Wilcox (of *BEAST OF THE YELLOW NIGHT*-fame) plays Lindsay, a beautiful blonde who cannot bring herself to be intimate with men — unless they are dead. Released in 1972, *LOVE ME DEADLY* quickly became a favorite on the drive-in circuit due to its subject matter. With prolonged scenes of romantic courting there are moments of unadulterated

dullness, but the juxtaposition of tenderness with satanic necrophiliac rituals will appeal to fans of the macabre. Witnessing the stunning Wilcox mount a frozen corpse with her ample assets on display is somewhat unsettling to say the least. Especially as necrophilic sex is the only sex presented on screen. The acting is risible and the tone intentionally sinister. Alongside the necrophilia are a murderous child, child-abuse undertones and much more to offend delicate viewers. However, a mature handling of the issues implies good intentions on behalf of at least one member of the crew (perhaps associate producer H.B. Halicki, star of the original *GONE IN 60 SECONDS?*). Indeed only the last ten minutes will appeal to sub-genre fans with more "specialist tastes." All in all, a daring, provocative and mildly satisfying B-movie for those with more than a little patience.

**I.K.U. (2000).** Having shocked and amazed in equal measure at film festivals and art galleries worldwide, this is a film to take note of. Picking up where *BLADE RUNNER* left off, *I.K.U.* takes you on a bizarre journey of replicants implanted with sex chips, motor-biking beauties and ever present hardcore sex. *I.K.U.* is Japanese for "I'm coming" or "orgasm"; an apt title for a film that delivers the money shot through a fish tank in a sushi restaurant. This is not your average porno spin-off of a successful Hollywood film. *EDWARD PENIS-HANDS* it most definitely is not. The film begins as it means to go on by impressing the audience with a fantastic high-tech futuristic credit sequence and impressive soundtrack courtesy of Japanese dance act The Saboten. This cuts to the *I.K.U.* runner and Reiko having violent futuristic sex in an elevator. Despite being spoken in English and Japanese, the loose plot is fairly easy to follow. Writer/director Shu Lea Cheng has delivered an impressive work — an arthouse, science fiction, mainstream, porn adventure. She can be safe in the knowledge that she has turned the oxymoron that is "mainstream porn" on its head. Indeed she has succeeded in doing justice to each of the genres she crosses. The photography, lighting and camerawork are absolutely stunning, so ensure you view this on the Uplink DVD to get



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full appreciation of the artistry on display here. The special effects are on a par with your average Hollywood blockbuster and this really should appeal to fans of THE MATRIX or indeed BLADE RUNNER. Despite the more graphic close-ups being 'fogged' this is an exceptionally erotic film. There is also more sex on display here than in your average porno. This includes sci-fi fisting, sex doll orgies, pussy POVs, mechanical dildos as well as sex in a spider's web of rope. All this plus a choice of

four endings, none of which are supplied as definitive, and you have an essential DVD purchase. However, if CAFÉ FLESH annoyed you with its pretentiousness then avoid this at all costs.

**SEX WISH (1975).** Believe it or not, this roughie remake of DEATH WISH far out-sleazes its source material. It opens with a fantastically sinister CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST-esque theme tune playing as the camera follows a hooded man prowling the backstreets of NYC. This is interrupted by a howling scream prompting a cut to your host for the evening, the eponymous Harry Reems sharing a bath with a brunette beauty. Hardcore sex ensues within a matter of seconds. Harry leaves his ladyfriend's apartment just as said hooded man arrives. Having been lured into a false sense of 70's porn security, the viewer is subjected to a vile attack on the woman invol-



ing a gag, rope and a dildo. What follows is 80 minutes of scenes alternating between Harry seeking to avenge his lover's death, Harry seducing a variety of ladies (all hardcore but played out as love scenes) and the killer snorting poppers, raping women and torturing couples. The rape scenes are filmed pornographically and all culminate in the victims being sliced with the killer's sword. Since Alpha Blue re-released this it has become something of a cult favorite and there's no denying it is very of-its-time, but how does it fare today? Shocking as hell, quite frankly. It makes BAISE MOI seem tame by comparison; this really is wall-to-wall sleaze and is incredibly uncomfortable to watch. If you are a fan of the rape-revenge exploitation genre then you need to see this but don't expect to find any comfort within.

#### ADAM GROVES; Manhattan Beach, CA

**ZOR — NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE FORCE! (1998).** A fairly typical Bollywood epic, meaning right off the bat that it features more daring, energy and imagination than most American movies. It's about a determined journalist looking to uncover

the identity of a terrorist organization responsible for a series of bombings. He runs afoul of two fellow scoops that try their damndest to thwart his efforts, only to have our hero fall in love with one of them. They get married, but their bliss is short lived, as the protagonist's brother turns out to be the leader of the offending organization...and this is only the first hour of a film that has enough genre-hopping to fill a dozen R.D. Steckler movies, jumping from a thriller to a slapstick comedy to a sappy romance to a John Woo-styled actioner. It ends up in a courtroom, complete with shocking revelations, impassioned speeches, and an angry mob. Outrageous, over-the-top and irresistible stuff. I still don't know who or what "Zor" is, though...or "the force" I can't underestimate.

**DISCO FEVER (1986).** More Bollywood madness! For the severely brain-damaged only, this Esquire magazine-sponsored two-and-a-half hour compilation consists entirely of disco numbers culled from various Bollywood movies (whose titles, flashed across the bottom of the screen over each corresponding clip, include KHUD-DAAR, JEET HAMAARI and DISCO DANCER). Mostly we get to witness — lucky us! — hundreds of geeks bopping in incredibly bright, gaudy dance halls, along with a band of boogie-ing ghosts and a dancer who refuses to halt his show — even though he's being fired upon by a determined sniper! It all adds up to an eye-popping phantasmagoric lightshow that would make Fellini proud — it's THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT, Hindi style!

**HOUSE (1998).** Based on what I understand is a celebrated play, this is some serious Canadian weirdness about a motor-mouthed spaz, played by famed performance artist (and this film's co-scripter) Daniel MacIvor, who invites a bunch of strangers to his house so he can tell them the story of his life. What transpires is essentially a feature length Denis Leary-styled monologue spiced with dramatizations starring members of the audience. With ultra-cartoony art direction and absurdly hyper-stylized staging, it often feels suffocatingly monotonous (this is a movie where all the characters appear on-screen in synchronicity with their names in the opening credits); it deserves points, though, for being so defiantly off-kilter.

**FAGIN'S CHILDREN (1995).** A threadbare crime picture, based on a real incident, that, with its low-rent black and white photography and documentary-like realism, sorta reminded me of THE HONEYMOON KILLERS. Set in Santa Barbara, Ca, it's about a mopey-headed teen (Brad Davis) drawn into the web of a psychopath (Paul Hagerty) who runs a pubescent crime ring — so far, so wrong, but when the power-mad Hagerty commits a senseless murder, things spiral completely out of control. Writer/director Peter Hyoguchi (FIRST, LAST AND DEPOSIT) grew up in Santa Barbara, and he clearly knows the milieu; his cast of bored SoCal rich kids are flawlessly rendered studies of a type I'll admit to knowing a bit too well myself. Unfortunately, Hyoguchi pretty much flubs the descent-into-madness angle, with much hysterical overacting and poorly choreographed action ruining what should be a nail-biting climax. Still well worth seeing, though, boasting as to does one out-and-out classic scene: the protagonist attempting to lose his virginity in a cheap motel room while STAR TREK plays on TV.

**FLEISCH [a.k.a. Spare Parts] (1978).** An intriguing European TV movie about a young couple on a doomed vacation in New Mexico (where everyone inexplicably speaks German!). The man is kidnapped by a mysterious ambulance and his wife teams up with a sympathetic trucker, discovering that the ambulance's drivers transport unwilling victims to a hospital where their bodies are chopped up and their organs sold to the highest bidder. Well constructed, subversive and engaging fare; if not for the cheesy production values and unsatisfying coda, this would be a classic. In any event, you'd never see explicit sex and violence like this film's on American television! Retitled SPARE PARTS for the US video release, though it bears no relation to the similarly themed David Kaufelt novel of the same name.

#### MATT MOSES; Brooklyn, NY.

**NERO SU BIANCO [Black on White] (1968).** Heavy-handed experimental filmmaking is the pits. There's nothing worse than dissecting the life out of something — of which all the alleged greats of the French New Wave and their European cronies are guilty. That Tinto Brass's forgotten city symphony NERO SU BIANCO makes such a solid effort to experiment relentlessly, yet remain aesthetically appealing, separates him from all his existentially despairing contemporaries. In just over an hour, Brass covers all the ground (and then some) established by international film experimentation while following the lovely Caucasian Anita Sanders and black love interest Terry Carter. As the couple roam the city in search of anything but a plot, fated to make physical contact in only the last minutes of the film, Brass barrages the viewer with jump cuts, shots in negative, found footage (including the legendary eyeball slicing sequence from UN CHIEN ANDALOU), and pretty much

anything else he pulls from his filmmaking thesaurus. No minor innovator, he also mixes in a fair share of imagery bound to make even the most jaded viewer wonder what they're seeing and why — always a sign of inspiration, if not genius. British psych-band Freedom perform a handful of songs which occasionally leads the mood toward that of amateur music videos, but on the whole the music helps ground the ambling film. Brass has come up with a stunning bit of erotic swinging London and enough artful experimentation to slate this up as an ignored milestone of late '60s cinema. NERO accomplishes the seemingly impossible task of merging mondo and dream narrative — it's too bad he didn't get that far out when tweaking CALIGULA.

**MRS. BROWN YOU'VE GOT A LOVELY DAUGHTER (1968).** After the genre-defining success of A HARD DAY'S NIGHT, every other less successful British invasion band wanted to get in the act. Within a few years, Gerry and the Pacemakers, Freddie and the Dreamers and the Dave Clark Five had come up with a feature film with varying degrees of success. Particularly impressive is that Herman's Hermits knocked out two feature films before their star stopped shining, the decent HOLD ON! (1966) and their cinematic swan song, MRS. BROWN. The former managed some high-spirited, albeit forced and poorly acted, fun; the latter was much less successful. Mrs. Brown aims for free-spirited good times but lands a few yards away from a swinging Andy Hardy. Peter Noone and his pals play music to fund their questionable dream, a trip to





London to race their dog, the titular Mrs. Brown. Their journey puts them in the company of flighty ladies, eccentric millionaires and equally eccentric tramps, and leads to the eventual realization that home is where the heart is, even if it's dreaded Manchester. The musical numbers, ostensibly the film's greatest draw, are a little hard to stomach. There are a handful of decent tunes in the lot — even the most hardcore Hermits dissenter will find at least one surprisingly neat number — but far too many veer off into cockney goodtimes territory done best (and not very good at that) by Anthony Newley and the like. Unfortunately, the producers saw fit to give a number of songs to the supporting cast who warble their way through the tunes with nauseating gusto, most notably MY FAIR LADY's Stanley Holloway. MRS. BROWN also suffers from a rather weak supporting cast — Peter Noone could always hold his own, but the rest of the Hermits can't act for shit and none of the star-eyed love interests have much to offer. Director Saul Swimmer barely warrants mention besides to note that this industry veteran was probably just hired for his adequate track record. Unfortunately, this thin film seems to have settled into the ghetto of cultural curios, checking in for a permanent stay just as the Hermits decided it was in their best interests to hang up the instruments they weren't even allowed to play.

**JOE WAWRZYNIAK; Metuchen, NJ.**

**FREEWHEELIN' (1976).** This cool documentary centers on funky, blonde-maned, up-and-coming hot shot skateboarder par excellence Stacy Peralta, his cute, loving, twinkley-eyed groupie girlfriend Camille Darrin, Stacy's equally bitchin', in the zone buds Tom Sims and Ken Means, and friendly rival board rats Guy Grundy, Mike Weed, and Russell Wayne Howell as they rip through Los Angeles and San Francisco performing all the latest tricks and stunts for awestruck crowds, exchange pointers and advice, test their mettle in storm drains, sewer tunnels, and empty swimming pools, participate in local contests, and generally bum around the Sunshine State having a real fun, blithesome, groovy time of it. Scott Dittrich's sharp-eyed, unobtrusive, appealingly nonjudgmental you-are-there intimate direction sucks the viewer right into the skateboard phenomenon, offering an intriguing evocation of an interesting and underexplored sports subculture. He illustrates that skateboarding is a natural offshoot of surfing (most skateboarders are also surfers), a skateboarder's unique riding style is directly keyed to his distinctive personality, and how skateboarding

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provides a welcome relief from the drab blandness of boring ol' everyday routine life while depicting assorted amazingly graceful and agile skateboard feats in all their breathtaking glory. Crisply shot in a snazzy, but never overly flashy or self-conscious manner by Pat Darrin, further buoyed by a wonderful soundtrack of sweetly mellow pop songs and glowingly radiating a sunny, happy, care-free, infectious upbeat and spirit-lifting, peculiarly Californian positive vibe, this great, engrossing, unjustly forgotten and unheralded winner about making your dreams come true, realizing your full potential, and living your life the way you want to live it sans compromise crackles with an irresistibly ultra-kinetic buzz.

**IN HOT PURSUIT (1976).** If someone was to take an episode of THE DUKES OF HAZZARD, stretch it out to a ninety-minute feature length, crank up the idiotic hayseed tomfoolery to the noxiously stupid ninth degree, and substitute Bo and Luke Duke with a third-rate, Southern-fried white-bread hairball hippie Cheech and Chong-style stoner dope humor comedic duo, the net result of this ill-advised attempt at wannabe clever "high concept" tinkering would probably be a lot like this almost impossibly-boneheaded, down-home, mid-'70s, outdoor-picture-show, regional-redneck, tongue-in-cheek, car-chase-action romp. Real-life brothers Don and Bob Watson star as Oosh and Doosh, a pair of burly, bearded, hirsute longhair siblings who smuggle weed for a living and do their best to avoid getting arrested by the local yokel cops. Man, does this darling possess all the right wrong stuff: feeble direction by James I. West, Jr.; a bare-bones outline for a script; an eclectic film library score which alternates between cornball country swing and uproariously inappropriate groovy, syncopated, fuzztone-and-Hammond-organ rippin' psychedelic freak-out funky noise lifted from some European exploitation feature(!); piss-poor acting; dense, thick, heavily drawing country accents which render most of the dialogue borderline incomprehensible; hopelessly dated jokes about smokin' grass and gettin' high; a colorful array of quirky fringe characters which include a gruff drug-running airplane pilot and a black religious loony armored car security guard; hardly any story to speak of; a first-rate theme song called "Pot Plane"; and, best of all, a constant barrage of metal-mashin', heart-in-your-throat, hellbroke-for-an-early-grave loco car chases (no professional stuntmen were used for these tasty sequences). In short, this one's a whole lotta nice no-brainer cheapjack fun.

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## OFF THE RICHTER SCALE: A Talk with Cult Screenwriter

## W.D. RICHTER

By DAVID KONOW

You may not immediately know the name W.D. Richter, but when you start mentioning some of the films he's written (SLITHER, BRUBAKER, the 1978 remake of INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS, and the 1979 adaptation of DRACULA, just to name a few), they provoke fond memories. Richter has written a diverse body of work, but there are several common links in his work. His scripts were usually quirky and character driven stories. Most of the films he's written also did not do well in their initial runs, but in later years have become cinematic gems that live on in the minds of film buffs everywhere.

If you look up Richter's films on the Internet Movie Database, you'll clearly see the film fans of the world singing the praises of his celluloid buried treasures. One fan wrote SLITHER was: "A perfect, subversive, character-driven comedy...Script and direction mesh perfectly, and Caan is terrific as an unflappable stoic who seems to have wandered into the wrong film by mistake and finds himself confronted with one outrageous situation after another." Another wrote of BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA: "How can you not love a movie unwilling to take itself too seriously while at the same time still managing to keep a straight face?" And BUCKAROO BANZAI, which Richter directed? "A perfect antidote for a bad day, or week, and just writing about it makes me wish I had a copy handy."

Like these fans, I have often recalled Richter's work with the same warm nostalgia, and the same befuddlement the films he's written didn't become bigger hits at the box-office. And talking with Richter only made me enjoy his work even more.

**SHOCK CINEMA: How did you get started as a writer and why did you choose to become a screenwriter?**

W.D. Richter: I was an undergraduate English major in college, and I guess I did a little creative writing for myself on and off. But I thought I was headed for a career teaching English. Coming out of a small town in Connecticut, Hollywood seemed just an impossibility, but I liked movies all my life. When I was an undergraduate, they started the beginnings of a film program. It was fun to study what I'd always loved and it started to occur to me that there were film schools. So I thought I could try to get into a film school and see what that all meant...So I went to USC...I started to think since I liked to write, it was also the most practical because once you got out of film school, you could attempt to be that. If you wanted to be a director at that point, it wasn't very easy to get a little movie together. There weren't digital cameras then, there wasn't that tradition of putting it on your credit card. But if you're a writer, no matter what you're doing to pay the bills, you can always go home and write and keep trying. So I did that and I got a little scholarship out of USC that was with Warner Brothers.

There was a program there where they would take a graduate student coming out every year, and let that person kind of find his or her own level as an observer of sorts. I told them I was a writer and they said, "You need to be with the story development executives to see how that end works." They couldn't sit you down with a writer and let you watch him write and write and write, they showed you how writers got hired. So I became the assistant to a guy named Barry Beckerman, who was leaving almost when I got there,

and wound up being Jeff Sanford's assistant, who is a literary agent now. This was around '70, '71, when the movie business was getting a little wild and woolly. Interesting American movies were coming out and the studios were really loose. They had these \$7,500 development deals at Warner Brothers, which allowed an executive to call up a rock star and say: "You want to write a movie script?" So I got to see a lot of people come through those offices pitching scripts. I was there when Walter Hill pitched HICKEY AND BOGGS. He was an assistant director at that time, trying to be a writer and he came in and sold it to Jeff Sanford while I was sitting in the corner taking notes. Later he and I were laughing because he said, "I didn't know who you were. There was this other person in the room," and Jeff was very vague about saying who I was. That wasn't an era of executive assistants. Now when you walk into a room and there's only one executive, you'd think something is wrong, but then you'd walk in to see Jeff Sanford, why would there be another person in the room? So I started to see how it all worked, and it convinced me more and more that I should keep trying.

Then Warner Brothers decided they didn't need their story department. They fired all their union readers and had this hair-

on and kept writing on my lunch hours and evenings. Eventually I optioned something and that turned out to be SLITHER.

**SC: How was the craft of screenwriting viewed when you started writing scripts? Some feel that in certain eras of cinema, writing screenplays was considered declassé until certain scribes gained prominence.**

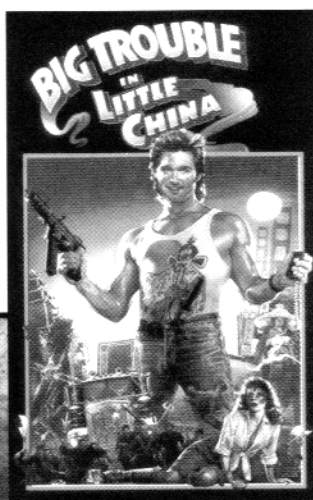
Richter: I didn't feel like we were looked at as second class citizens up front. When the process began, you were often the most important thing, it wasn't like five people are going to write this and you are just the first one. There wasn't a sense of being a monkey on a typewriter. I think [the studios] did have a lot of respect for the story because it was also a time in American movies when unique films were starting to make a

dent. FIVE EASY PIECES, MID-NIGHT COWBOY, even EASY RIDER. There was a sense of: "We need special material and then we'll find these really eccentric, energized directors." So I was in that era where the movies were going to be smaller in concept, but it didn't mean they might not break out in the theaters. My perception is, when the big movies started hitting, like JAWS and STAR WARS, the story was less important than the execution, or the story had to be simple so that the execution could be almost bare bones. That's when the writers started to become elements in it, but not that important. They're assuming now that more than one person will work on a script, they truly assume that when they start. Unless my memory is really

wrong, I don't think that was the assumption going in [back then]. You had guys like Waldo Salt, Terry Southern, Ernest Lehman, there was an aura around the writer on that level, and you were the next generation, or you were people that were immediately in their shadow...I think the ideas were a little bolder and stranger, and a lot of them died after the first or second draft because they didn't seem like anything that anyone would go forward with. Now, they're a little more mechanical so that you can hire a technician and fix a sequence or do some dialog polishes, but you're never talking about the movie having a heart and soul that's authored by anybody. The risk on every individual film now has changed. We made SLITHER for about \$2 million dollars, and the studio wasn't panicked if it didn't work.

**SC: You mentioned how Charlie Eastman's scripts had an anything can happen quality, and I see that in a lot of your work as well. When you were writing SLITHER, which has a lot of crazy characters and twists and turns, did you go in writing it with that attitude in mind — to go loose and have fun?**

Richter: That was just my writing sensibility at the time. I was amused by these recreational vehicles, and the James Caan character was something fresh in my mind from high school. I was thinking about guys that were football stars who were obviously experiencing



Frank Langella in John Badham's DRACULA

brained notion the executives could read all the scripts, which was impossible. So Jeff Sanford gave me scripts to read and I ended up mutating into a story analyst, where I would read three or four scripts a day. I read a huge number of scripts. I read Charles Eastman's stuff and it came in the most eccentric fashion. I remember there was one script of his I had to cover, and I was so struck by the kind of reckless style. He didn't capitalize, he didn't punctuate, he just wrote, and yet it really was a writer working. The prose was wonderful, you were laughing out loud, and the dialog seemed so crazy, and natural.

For me, the page you read should be fun to read and not just the blueprint for a movie. I moved off from that job to work with Irvin Kershner when he was getting DIRTY HARRY ready. He didn't end up directing it and he had Frank Sinatra cast! So I saw all that going

their finest hour when they were eighteen. I think I have a comedic sensibility, and it didn't seem like the craziest thing to be writing a movie about in that period, it wasn't as risky as it seems like [today].

**SC: Did you work at all on the set of SLITHER?**

Richter: Yeah, I was on the set all the time. [Director] Howard Zieff and I are still very good friends. He really liked the material and he saw it as something I had authored, so he didn't have a defensive attitude about that. He wanted me to be around because if he had ideas, he didn't want to just improvise them, he wanted me to be there to try and make them integral to the piece. He had that kind of respect going in for the writer. It was a very deceptive beginning, because that's certainly not what you encounter all that time, but I said: "Hey, this is great. This is how it works. It's collaborative." That's not always the case, but I've had a lot of nice relationships with directors over the years, I don't have a lot of bitter stories.

**SC: A number of the films you've written have had interesting casts as well.**

Richter: I've always hoped that the quality of the writing, or the type of writing, would suggest you would find eccentric actors. Howard had a reputation, he was the king of commercials, but unusual commercials. He had a smart, eccentric sensibility, and he was immediately going for people like he had used in his commercials. Interesting faces, interesting characters. So that started for me, it gave me the confidence to keep writing that way because I thought somebody will go out and find actors to do this. It hasn't been some kind of a holy mission, but when I sit down to write something like the version of BODY SNATCHERS we made, there was some different level of humor from the original, but I guess I kind of had the confidence to write these characters that grew out of the SLITHER characters. Not like in a tight, evolutionary way, but just sort of a loose, serious/comedic sensibility so that you wind up with a director like Philip Kaufman who says, "I think Jeff Goldblum would be great. The hero can't be absolutely like Tom Terrific, it should be someone slightly skewed." So then you get the Donald Sutherlands and it becomes a self-perpetuating thing where you're then sort of encouraged to leave that voice on the page the next time because you say to yourself, "Gee, I liked the last cast." At some point, it comes around and bites you because they want the straight-ahead actors in the bigger movies.

**SC: SLITHER featured James Caan right as he was becoming a star. What do you recall about working with him at this time?**

Richter: I think he was confused about what he was going to end up being in life. I don't know if he started thinking he was going to be a leading man. THE GODFATHER was a big deal, but it didn't immediately get him the biggest roles, so when Howard approached him about this quirky little movie, I think he was a lit-



David Keith and Robert Redford in BRUBAKER

tle nervous. In all fairness, it wasn't easy to see what this movie was going to be. It's one thing to be talking about airstream trailers and discover vans and stuff, but what does that really mean? There wasn't really any [point of] reference: "This movie is like..." It didn't have a lot of comfort zones he could go into where he could say, "I know what I'm doing here." So for Jimmy, it was a big leap of faith to put himself in this movie.

**SC: You later worked with Peter Bogdanovich on NICKELODEON. Bogdanovich had worked as a journalist before he became a director, and the way I understood it, NICKELODEON was based on the anecdotes from classic directors he'd gathered while interviewing them, is that correct?**

Richter: Nothing is ever that simple. Irwin Winkler used to come up with one or two line ideas, go to writers he'd worked with and say: "Would you like to write this script? I have this idea on spec, I will then be the producer and try to sell it for a lot of money." He said to me, "Wanna do a movie about the early days of the silent era? The beginning, the birth of movies." He never had more than that, so it was tantalizing. You'd go away, do a little research and try to structure a story.

I wrote a script called STARLIGHT PARADE that took place at the very beginning of the motion picture

We walked across the dark lot, we go into his office, he sits me down and he says: "You know, I really don't want to make your script, but I want to make a movie about the silent era. I've been researching one and I've had an assistant out there researching anecdotal stuff. I want it to end with the beginning of World War I, so I can't start at the very beginning of silent films, it has to be pushed deeper into the era just as talkies are coming in, where I want to end my movie. Are you interested in writing that script with me because I really like this script you've written." I said, "What are you actually saying? Are you saying you don't want to direct this script, but you told people you did?" He said, "I had to. We had to take this off the marketplace, there obviously can't be two of these..."

This was kind of a business question and if I say yes, I don't even know what I'm saying yes to because Columbia bought my script, they're trying to find directors and it is about that era. Peter said, "That's okay, so they bought your script. So we'll put it in a drawer, they'll make a new deal with you, and you and I will write a new movie. What do you think?" I don't remember what I said, but at this point everyone wanted Bogdanovich. Irwin asked me, "Would you do that?" I thought for a minute and I said, "I don't know...Yes, I guess. It's not a dumb idea he's got." Irwin asked, "What did Columbia say?" and I told him, "They were just thrilled to get Bogdanovich." They paid for the script, put it in a drawer, and hired me to start all over with him. It was a weird process, I'm not at good co-writing from scratch. At one point, the script was over 200 pages because I'd write a five page scene and Peter would turn it into a nine page scene. He would call me at 3 in the morning and read it to me playing all the parts! It was very spooky! Finally, he was told he could make it only if he whittled it way down.

**SC: Didn't he tell the studio "BIRTH OF A NATION" was over two hundred pages" when they were concerned about the length?**

Richter: Yeah, that was his rationale. He was so well versed in film history, he could prove almost anything had happened before so they should let him do it again! It was skillful and it worked! He didn't get to shoot the 250 pages but they didn't say, "Get out of here, you're nuts." They said, "Oh, that's interesting, but I don't think we can afford this 250 page script..."

**SC: When you worked with Peter as a collaborator, was he good at coming up with ideas?**

Richter: Oh yes, he was full of ideas because that world was paradise to him. He loves movies and he couldn't get enough of it.

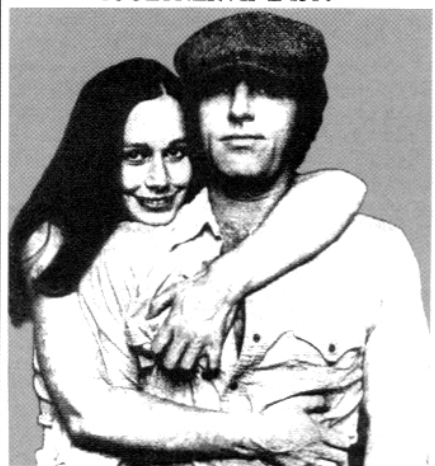
**SC: The opening day of NICKELODEON, didn't it cost five cents admission?**

Richter: Oh! You may be right because Peter wanted to do what it cost back then. It made a dollar that day!

**SC: After NICKELODEON, you wrote the remake of INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS. How did you approach updating the material?**

Richter: Philip Kaufman and I felt we would allow it to be funny, but we wanted it to be like the original in that it would be set in a small town. The movie that got green-lit, I set it in a small California town, and made it contemporary, like the movie is now, but we didn't put it in a big city. We got the green light, there was location scouting and they were building some sets. Phil and I were sitting around one day, and I can't remember what the catalyst was, but we suddenly found ourselves talking about the kind of paranoia you felt in our society at that time was placed in cities. We had really missed the boat. In reconceiving this movie, we had done a really stupid thing putting it in a small town. We had this quiet moment of truth five or six weeks away

**KITTY KOPETZKY & DICK KANIPSIA. TOGETHER AT LAST!**





from principal photography. So this frantic reconception started, and I don't remember how much story had to change, but obviously a lot did, and I was in a hotel every day doing changes and on the set on and off.

**SC:** Like a lot of science fiction in the fifties, there was a subtext in *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* about McCarthyism. Was there a goal to have a hidden message in the '78 version?

**Richter:** No, I think we were just trying to deal with the legitimate suspicions and fears that people had of what was going on around them. Everyone was wondering whether the government was doing this or that. So there we had the possibility that the entire society wasn't what it seemed, that you could trust the surface and you had to scratch beneath it to find out what was really going on right beneath your nose.

**SC:** So where the first *INVASION* was a McCarthy era film, the 1978 version became a post-Watergate science fiction film.

**Richter:** Yes, I think in that sense without having a simple, tight theme, it's basically nothing is what it seems.

**SC:** Wasn't the '78 version of *INVASION* a movie Pauline Kael championed?

**Richter:** Oh yes, God she went crazy for it. Her review was probably the nicest I've ever gotten. She didn't influence the audience because she was writing in *The New Yorker* and there was a certain intellectual level that she was past the group of people that could affect the box-office so much. But she was so smart, and clearly loved movies that if you were in the business you were aware of her, and she was an intimidating person. If she liked your movie, people in Hollywood thought, "It must be good."

**SC:** Next you did the remake of *DRACULA* with Frank Langella. I would assume writing *DRACULA* would be a dream gig for a writer.

**Richter:** Yeah, actually it is! It was a ball, it's almost like you don't have to be paid to do it.

**SC:** Why at the end of the '70s was Universal interested in remaking *DRACULA*?

**Richter:** The Broadway play of *DRACULA* was very successful, and it was incredibly campy. So you would say if you're going to make a movie of *DRACULA* with Frank Langella, which is what producer Walter Mirisch presented to the studio, you must be getting ready to do a version of that play. But Walter said to me, "No Frank doesn't want to, he doesn't think that kind of campiness will translate to the big screen. We want to do a real *DRACULA*." And I assumed the studio was still intrigued because this handsome, successful guy who created *DRACULA* wanted to do a movie of it. It was a pretty glamorous idea. There hadn't been that many *DRACULA*s at the time so it didn't seem like a retread. And John Badham wanted to do it. John was originally going to direct *BRUBAKER* and I knew him very well. He left that project because he was offered *SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER*. They had already gotten a release date for *DRACULA*, Universal was in that organized frame of mind, and I realized before I wrote it they were going to make this thing. They had the actors, the director and a strong enough story in the book, that they thought I wouldn't totally botch it!

**SC:** I've never read the original Bram Stoker book, so how close would you say your script was to it?

**Richter:** Well the book is pretty tough going, it's all letters. People don't realize it's Jonathan Harker writing to his fiancée. It's not told in a third person, present narrative and you have to yank all of that out of there. It's a very strange piece of writing.

**SC:** Also in the film is a variation of the line about the children of the night.

**Richter:** I changed that. In the book it's: "Children of the night, what sweet music they make." In the movie he says, "Children of the night, what sad music they make." There's the big conceptual change in the entire piece, because from that springs the notion that *Dracula* wants to cross over and be among the living. He's not happy being among the dead...We wanted it to be more of longing, of romantic loss. He wishes he didn't have to have blood, he wishes he could be among the living, and eternal life is not worth the loss of all of that.

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—PAULINE KAEI, *New Yorker*

From deep space...



**SC:** What was it like to have Laurence Olivier reading your dialog?

**Richter:** You know, you never think it's going to happen, so when you hear it's going to happen, more than actually seeing it, is being told by John that he got Olivier. And that's when you sort of go, "Oh my God." I went to England because Walter Mirisch is a very nice man and he wanted me to be there for the first couple of weeks. We went upstairs to a little castle room and all the actors gathered around a table and read the script. Olivier was having a very bad bout with a degenerative nerve disease, so it was painful for him, you couldn't shake his hand. So he was a gracious man but he was almost inaccessible because he was a fragile presence. He didn't mix it up with people a lot, but when he would come on to the set he would just become Van Helsing. You absolutely wouldn't know he was sick watching him act. I also was thrilled with Donald Pleasence, I was a huge a Donald Pleasence fan. That was also exciting.

**SC:** You had worked on *BRUBAKER* for a while in the seventies before it finally came out in 1980. How did the project originate and how did you come aboard?

**Richter:** I was hired by Ron Silverman, who was working for Ted Mann at that time, to adapt a pile of newspaper clippings, I read the book that Tom Mertz had co-authored with Arthur Ross (about *BRUBAKER*). Initially I said: "This has to be a black comedy because it's so grim, that if you just tell what really happened, I can't imagine why anyone would go out and see it. Even if it were compelling, it's just ghastly." So I wrote something that was broader than it needed to be, but some of the humor that's in that script is still in the original film. We tried, but we just couldn't get it off the

ground. Badham tried, then he went away. One day Redford got his hands on it and we got a cold call that he wanted to make the movie. Bob Rafelson came on first to sort of try and make it work, but he wasn't looking for Redford. He went to Nicholson, Tommy Lee Jones, he was looking all over for the warden, and he got a call out of the blue that Redford had the script, wanted to make it, and wanted to meet with Rafelson. They got together, and they hit it off well enough to start making the movie, then the shit hit the fan.

Rafelson was fired, and Redford thought: "I'll call Newman, because he made *COOL HAND LUKE*. What's this guy Stuart Rosenberg like?" Newman told him to consider him, we all flew to L.A. and he was available. This was another case where the director said he'd do it if I was there all the time because it was a huge cast, a tricky concept to get your head around, and I had all the research in my head. And he was asked to start photography in a week! I liked working with Redford, he was completely easy going. He's very unassuming. He's haunted by the fact that everybody recognizes him when they see him. He really is an observer, and he ends up being observed. He would have these wistful conversations with [my wife] Susan and me in New York when we'd meet for dinner: "So what did you do today? Walk up and down the streets? Because I can't do that anymore! People look back at me and I want to look at them!"

**SC:** Next came *ALL NIGHT LONG*. Like a lot of seventies films, it's character driven, the humor is more subtle, and it's offbeat and quirky. Do you feel if the film had come out in the seventies it might have done better?

**Richter:** I don't know. I have a feeling that a fatal flaw is Streisand's name. I want to put this very clearly because I'm not talking negatively at all about her. *ALL NIGHT LONG* was not conceived as a vehicle to have two big stars in it. Jean-Claude Truamont had this idea and the studio gave him their blessing to make a film about people who work at night. It was originally called *NIGHT PEOPLE* and he knew nothing more

about it than that. "You find a writer, talk about it, come up with a story and maybe we can make a deal." I had met Jean-Claude and I had seen a foreign film he had done, because he's French, and I liked it. It was simple, it was human, and I told them: "Let me think about this." Basically my take on the story is it wasn't about people who wanted to work at night, it was a story about a man whose circumstances had changed and he had to work at night. Truamont wanted to shape the film for Gene Hackman. He knew Gene and loved him, and that's who I tried to write the script for. We developed it, got it to where we were comfortable, it was sent to Hackman and he said yes. The role of the woman was to be part of the ensemble. She's the romantic lead, but not Barbra Streisand. I would have conceived it differently. So Lisa Eichhorn was hired, started, and for a variety of reasons, friction on the set and stuff, she left the movie. Streisand, who had originally turned it down and I can't remember why, but she suddenly got it into her head that she really wanted to do it. She wanted to work with Gene Hackman, and we got another one of those calls: "Barbra Streisand wants to do this." My God. Nobody's gonna say no, but she did not come in and ask for changes, she wanted to come in and do that role, and it's a little lopsided. I remember people thinking it was a Hackman/Streisand movie where they were going to be together from the beginning, and it would be apparent it was structured for those two. People said to me, "She's in it, but she's not." It's a strange feeling.

**SC:** You had also written a funny song for Streisand that she performs in the film. That's something that I love in movies, when people who can actually sing perform terribly on purpose for their role.

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# SHARP RELIEF

TAVIS  
by RIKER

Well, we've finally come down from our 'peace and love' installment of Sharp Relief (thanks for the B-12 shots and orange slices), and so back to Earth we plummet for a spring selection of Vegas Schlock, Canadian Beats, vintage 'Soundies' and DVD arena torment!

From "Klubb Super 8 Video" we get a rare cinema verite of the last gasp of the 'cool' Las Vegas in **NANCY AND LEE IN LAS VEGAS (Shocking Videos)** — the Nancy being Sinatra and the Lee being Hazlewood. This Swedish production, co-directed by Hazlewood with Torbjorn Axelmann, follows the duo as they open their act at the Riviera. We kick off with a loose rendition of "These Boots are Made for Walkin'", with lots of wooden improv by Nancy, and Lee doing his cornfed denim routine. In between we have mucho backstage chat sessions, which provide a lesson in lounge economics ("we are making ZERO dollars for this engagement," says director Hugh Lambert), scary security guard ramblings, and the hard-living bandleader Billy Strange's faux-exhaustion after a bad gig. After a spine-tingling 'orchestra and dancers run-through' (thankfully in montage mode), Lee and Nancy team up for such chestnuts(?) as "Jackson" and "Machine Gun Kelly". Did we forget the 'Nancy teases her hair on the dressing room couch' segment? Yes. Truthfully, the most enjoyable aspect of **NANCY AND LEE IN LAS VEGAS** are the traveling shots down the strip, where you can see who ELSE was playing (Jerry Lewis and Sergio Mendes at Caesars! Bobby Darin at the Desert Inn! Connie Stevens and Lonnie Schorr at the Sands?).

Last column we unearthed a great 'buried treasure' from 70's TV featuring Harry Nilsson, and this time we have another, although a word other than 'treasure' springs to mind, and it's a substance that should stay buried. Anyone? Anyone? **RINGO** was a 1978 NBC special featuring the oldest Beatle, in a cheesefest that makes Sir Paul at his most unctuous seem like, well, John. We kick off the proceedings as **George Harrison** (Yes, he really showed up to help out his fellow fab) holds a press conference to announce Ringo's upcoming 'satellite' concert. He drops in a quick Rutles reference, which instantly classifies George's appearance as officially the best thing on this show. The classic "Prince and the Pauper" plot gets dragged out again as Ringo also plays Ognir Rrats (get it?), a sad sack selling star maps in Hollywood. Carrie Fisher is his girlfriend, who is "16, beautiful, and really stoned", and Art Carney devours all scenery-like objects in his own 'Eugene O'Neill' world as his dad. As the 'real' Ringo just wants a break from his crazy schedule, he runs into Rrats, and they

change places, during a horrifying 'interpretative' dance to "Yellow Submarine" (Sid & Marty Krofft on Quaaludes). Other Ringo-sung Beatle classics get slaughtered here, in fact pretty much all of them. Add Vincent Price, Angie Dickinson and John Ritter, and you've got to be kidding me. Most interesting end credit (spoken), Seymour Cassel as dialogue 'coach'!. Please.

Last column we hit the town to watch vintage Vita-phone music films, and this time we stayed in to check out a great compilation of vintage jazz and blues 'Soundies,' short films from the late 40's, featuring such artists as **Louis Jourdan**, **Meade Lux Lewis**, **King Cole Trio** (before he added the 'Nat') with **Ida James** and **Sister Rosetta Thorpe**. Many of these films include great dance and more risqué burlesque acts as well, and swing factor is always high! Yowza! More vintage style comes courtesy director **Donald Owen** and the National Film Board of Canada's 1967 short **TORONTO JAZZ**, as host/Jazz vocalist **Don Francks** (A Canadian stalwart who went on to years of movie and TV appearances, including Cronenberg's **FAST COMPANY**) drives around and rambles the town chatting with groovy players and cool artists on the scene. The amazing guitarist **Lenny Breau** brilliantly jazzes up Bach, and a trip to a sculptor's studio brings some funny concepts for instrument design. The club scenes are smoky, the bands sound cool, and the atmosphere is legit.

In a recent column we praised the Richard Pryor box set, and now for those of you on a tighter budget, Rhino has paired down the 8 CD collection to a handy 2-CD "**Richard Pryor Anthology**", which still delivers the goods. We also tracked an episode of his hastily cancelled 1977 NBC series, **THE RICHARD PRYOR SHOW**. The hit-and-miss hour features Pryor and his ensemble (including Paula Kelly and Thalmus

Rasulala) in sketches ranging from hilarious (a timely 'STAR WARS Cantina' piece) to silly (Richard as inept western gunslinger). The hour ends with an elaborate musical recreation of 40's Harlem, with Pryor and Rasulala as soldiers back from WWII, and Kelly as a 'Satin Doll' torch singer who chooses her career over 'soldier boy'. Pretty cool stuff, no wonder it didn't even last a season at Numbnuts Broadcasting Company.

We venture back into the present with a pair of DVD concert offerings, radically different in style. **PAT METHENY GROUP: IMAGINARY DAY LIVE (WB Jazz)** is a document of the veteran fusion band's 1997-98 tour, captured at a picturesque amphitheater in Northern California. While the music is (as always) top-notch, the director (and band bassist) Steve Rodby insists upon 80's-style gimmicks like hand-held personal camera cutaways (that are often blurry and are only distracting to the flow of the show), and having seen the tour at other venues, the dramatic lighting design isn't given it's due because they start the gig in late afternoon! So, while the music (mixed in Dolby 5.1 and Surround Sound) gets an "A", the misguided video direction gets a "D".

On a very different (much louder) note, the first concert DVD release by **Nine Inch Nails**, and **ALL THAT COULD HAVE BEEN (Nothing/Interscope)**, is a mind-blowing record of that band's comeback tour of 2000. After putting out an underappreciated record called "The Fragile," Bandleader **Trent Reznor** and his assembled group hit the road and redefined the term "works a lot better live." From the innovative lighting and multimedia projections to the ferocious performances by all, the DVD totally captures the dramatic show, and throws in tons of extra goodies like selectable camera angles (you know, like on the porn DVD's) and 5.1 sound mixing options for home 'theatres'-you can bet that consumer electronics salesmen are already using this title to show off state-of-the-art gear! Hats off to director Rob Sheridan and his crew for producing the best concert DVD yet.

The mailbox has been generously delivering great new releases to us here at SR, and after our latest headphone binge the winners include: "**Pieces of the Sun**" (Narada) by the **Tony Levin Band**, **King Crimson's "Level 5"** (DGM), JBK's live disc "**Playing in a Room with People**" (Medium) and "Kinoappartum" by **Jansen/Chianura** (Medium). "Kinoappartum" is a live recording of an original soundtrack to the Russian silent classic **MAN WITH THE MOVIE CAM-**

**ERA**, and it's a lot cooler than syncing up Pink Floyd to **THE WIZARD OF OZ**. The Levin and Crimson are great progressive rock with amazing playing and the JBK live showcases the provocative **Mick Karn**/ **Steve Jansen** rhythm section for an adoring audience in London. Excellent.

This last year has truly been a dismal one for events global and musical, with many fine musicians passing away, and the last kick in the crotch here at SR was when news of the suicide of **Big Country's Stuart Adamson** emerged at year's end. A great singer, guitarist and songwriter, there won't be another of him. And lastly — goodbye, George. All Rest in Peace. **Next Time:** Everything and Nothing — Sharp Relief live!

**Thanks to:** Anne Leighton, Julius, Tony Levin, Cecilia Esparga at WB Jazz, Gary Balaban.



## Ringo Starr, George Harrison and Mark Twain!



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Vincent Price  
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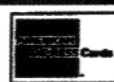


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# NEW RELEASES

**PULSE [Kairo] (Video Junkie; 2001).** The latest unsettling feature from director Kiyoshi Kurosawa (CURE) might seem like just another in the long parade of RING knock-offs, but it's a true original. An eerie ghost story for the high-tech age, as well as a haunting meditation on life, death and the isolation of the modern human condition. The script begins with two separate threads. A young man hangs himself in his apartment, female pal Michi (Kumiko Aso) discovers the body, strange images are seen on his computer, and he begins to haunt his friends. Meanwhile, internet novice Ryosuke (Haruhiko Kato) gets a rude surprise when he's automatically connected to a creepy site that asks "Do you want to meet a ghost?" and he slowly discovers that the spirit world is encroaching on the living. Along with forbidden rooms and spectral encounters, more and more people suddenly commit suicide or vanish, until it infects all of Tokyo. The two storylines eventually collide when Michi and Ryosuke meet, since they seem to be the last two people in this ghost metropolis. PULSE is a beautifully crafted movie with impressive visuals (particularly the final, apocalyptic cityscape), and instead of aiming for simple scares, Kurosawa has a more melancholy agenda, since the leads are lonely souls, as are these shadowy ghosts, hovering just within our vision and pleading for help. It makes for a fascinating and unpredictable tale from one of Japan's most intriguing talents.

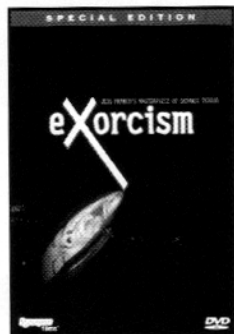
**ORDINARY DECENT CRIMINAL (VSoM; 2000).** This Irish gangster film was picked up for US distribution by Miramax, but still sits on the shelf, collecting dust — which rarely happens when a double Oscar winner like Kevin Spacey is top-billed. Modelled on the life of Dublin criminal Martin Cahill (who was also the basis for John Boorman's THE GENERAL), Spacey stars as Michael Lynch, Ireland's most notorious gangster. Lynch is as vicious as he is charming, and the script bounces between his criminal activities, gang loyalty, court appearances, and home life (with Linda Fiorentino co-starring as wife Christine), as he and his gang rob banks and jewelry companies, butt heads with the IRA, and skillfully allude the law. It often seems like Lynch is as interested in outsmarting the cops, as he is in making an easy buck, but as the authorities (led by vengeful Stephen Dillane) bring the hammer down on him and his gang, his crooked life starts to unravel. Director Thaddeus O'Sullivan constructs tightly-choreographed and edited crime sequences (such as a ballsy museum artwork snatch in broad daylight), and while Spacey's accent wavers a bit, he's effortlessly charismatic. Complete with a score by Blur frontman Damon Albarn, it's a slight but amusing portrait of a master criminal.

**NECROMANIAC (www.cutthroatvideo.com; 2000).** My expectations were high for this sicko sequel to Ron Atkins' SCHIZOPHRENIAC, but it lacks the original's unique "What the fuck am I watching?" quality. Harry Russo (John Giancaspro) is still a deranged dickhead — molested by his parents, hot off the previous flick's killing spree, and still toting his creepy ventriloquist dummy. It's also set in a universe where naked babes lounge on their couches, massaging their privates, as maniacs go door-to-door dressed as old ladies, in hopes of killing and raping them (in that order). Hot bitches, old ladies, dyke hitchhikers, and dirty whores — they're all victims of this brain-damaged creep, who wears cheap wigs and depends on crude gore FX that would've embarrassed H.G. Lewis. Russo is a masterpiece of misogyny, and when he's not sputtering, shooting up or screaming at the sky, this abrasive cockwartz is dealing with tripped-out hallucinations. A little Russo goes a long way, while subplot padding has a couple of equally-repellent cops on his trail and Ron Atkins in a funny cameo as Jesus Christ, who meet Harry in the Las Vegas desert. Giancaspro gives another fearlessly outlandish, out-of-his-mind performance, but this retread can't repeat the first's lowlife dementia. It just shambles along — kill, rant and repeat, ad nauseam — without any sleazy new ideas.

**MARI-COOKIE AND THE KILLER TARANTULA (Sub Rosa; 1998).** Touted as the European edition of Jess Franco's EIGHT LEGS TO HOLD YOU, this Spanish-lensed horror-sexploitation spoof is brutally unwatchable. Lina Romay plays a scary, middle-aged "avant garde" performance artist whose mansion is filled with giant fake cobwebs and naked victims, because in her spare time, she's an immortal sex-monster. When aroused, she even transforms into a large rubber spider with a woman's face glued onto it. The movie's pathetic excuse for "star power" are past-their-prime scream queens Linnea Quigley as a repressed mother and Michelle Bauer as an exhibitionist sheriff — who struts about in a cowboy hat, leather jacket and g-string. But forget the fact that both are getting a bit old and weather-beaten for this type of scantily-clad crap because, hard to believe, their acting talent has actually diminished over the years! At least Amber Newman is hot (though bubble-headed) as Quigley's daughter, who's lured into Ms. Tarantula's chunky clutches. The dialogue is muddy, the sex scenes are tedious, aging Romay's lengthy strip sequences are gross, and this crude, unimaginative project will leave you limp. If Franco's name wasn't plastered on it, you'd guess it was masterminded by some homeless Alzheimer's victim who found a movie camera in a dumpster.

## DVDementia

A naked woman (Lina Romay) is tied down, spread eagle and whipped by a topless tormentress during a Black Mass. No question, it's a Jess Franco film! I've never been a fan of Franco's work, and while 1974's EXORCISM (Synapse) didn't change my opinion, it's a better than average outing with a bleak mood and lots of bare skin.



Franco even gives himself the lead role of a defrocked priest who writes deviant stories, plays voyeur and slaughters with a religious fervor. In addition to its splendid English-language print, the dvd includes a trailer, a tamer version of the opening sequence, and (best of all) a commentary by 71-year-old Franco! Although it's sometimes difficult to understand his thick accent, Jess offers insights on the various versions of the movie, why he cast himself, and even admits to not liking most of his own films (probably the only thing he and I have in common). A must for Franco-o-philes!

**THE EROTIC RITES OF COUNTESS DRACULA (Seduction Cinema)** looks like your basic no-budget sexploitation, except for one credit — William Smith as Count Dracula! Alas, Smith is only on-screen for three minutes, as he puts the bite on a '60s chick named Scarlet and disappears for most of the film. She then

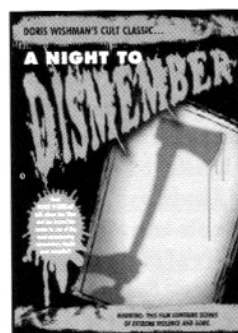
takes over Drac's castle, stripping naked and sucking the blood of virgins, with the help of a shaggy-haired Renfield. The dvd includes dull bloopers, plus commentary by writer-director Donald F. Glut, producer Kevin Glover and editor Dean McKen-drick. Despite their non-stop praise for lead actress Brick Randall, she's woefully plastic (and I'm not just referring to her tits), and even during the lengthy nude scenes, these dweebs just babble about its technical aspects, admire their FX and pat themselves on their collective backs. Still, it's not bad for a movie that took three weeks to write, shoot, edit, and finish.

Joseph Sarno's steamy 1967 melodrama **INGA [Jag — en osklud] (Seduction Cinema)** debuts on dvd in an outstanding package. This character-driven import erotica revolves around the sexual awakening of a teenage virgin (luscious Marie Liljedahl) and her older Aunt's romantic travails, and this gorgeous uncut print (struck from a 35mm negative) comes in two versions — English dubbed and in Swedish with subtitles. There are also a pair of trailers, 9 minutes of outtakes, a recent audio interview with Liljedahl, plus a terrific commentary by Sarno, assistant Peggy Stephens and US producer Sam Sherman. Although they're sometime vague on hard facts (hey, it's been 35 years!), there's loads of great anecdotes, including how Liljedahl became a diva following this debut, that Marie's masturbation scene wasn't faked, and how the film was a huge hit — except in its Swedish homeland, because it was directed by an American.

Tinto Brass' 1992 bishop-polisher **ALL LADIES DO IT [Cosi Fan Tutte] (Cult Epics)** arrives in a bare bones dvd with a full-screen, English-language print. Creamy-skinned Claudia Koll plays married Diana, an unapologetic tease who enjoys some "happy banging" on the side. When hubbie Paolo discovers she's a slut, he's pissed, she thinks he's "stifling" her natural urges,

and Diana takes off on a solo sexual odyssey — including a derriere-fetishist and an outdoor orgy/rave where she doses on Ecstasy. No surprise, much of the stylish cinematography is spent on loving shots of bare butts, crotches, garters, see-through fashions, and overflowing cleavage, but it's still only a middling effort that lacks the hallucinatory exuberance of Brass' early work. In the end, it's just one dim, sexual soap opera, with self-serving characters and a "they screwed happily ever after" ending.

I first reviewed Doris Wishman's 1986 horror fiasco **A NIGHT TO DISMEMBER (Elite)** back in SC#8, and considered it her most pathetic, disjointed effort. Well, the film might be agony to sit through, but this dvd is a must for Wishman fans, thanks to its hilarious audio commentary by director Doris and cinematographer C. Davis Smith (who shot 17 of her flicks!). Right off the bat, she explains that a film lab destroyed big hunks of the movie, and she spent 8 months stitching together this version, using 60% of her original footage and outtakes. No wonder it's a fucking mess! Smith continually complains that his best shots are missing, she repeatedly tells him to "Watch the film and keep quiet," the pair bicker like an old married couple, and they're infinitely more fun than slogging through the movie. The disc also includes a 5-1/2 minute trailer that gives new meaning to the term hard-sell.



**TORRENTE, THE DUMB ARM OF THE LAW** [Torrente, El Brazo Tonto de la Ley] (VSOm; 1998). Santiago Segura took a break from his portly appearances in Alex de la Iglesia gems like DYING OF LAUGHTER in order to direct and write this Spanish black comedy, as well as playing Torrente — the nastiest, most inebriated cop in all of Madrid. He gets soused before his graveyard shift, ignores vandals and gang violence, and uses a deli's armed robbery as an opportunity to shoplift while the cashier is shotgunning. Torrente is a genetic mix of BAD LIEUTENANT and The Three Stooges. He's a sweaty, gross, rude, cowardly racist, who forces his wheelchair-bound father to beg for spare change and feeds him pureed leftovers from local restaurants. But when pop is mysteriously hospitalized after a Chinese meal, Torrente finally decides to work on a genuine crime, and stumbles across a major heroin ring that delivers its skag inside eggrolls. Neus Asensi heats up Torrente's comb-over passions as a nympho neighbor; while her geeky cousin Rafi (Javier Cámara) joins Torrente for nightly rounds and shooting practice in a crowded city park! Torrente eventually convinces Rafi and his pals to join him on a misguided undercover operation, which turns into a comedy of errors full of corpses, martial arts, dark truths, and a fuck-all finale. Segura obviously learned a lot about grim humor from de la Iglesia and put that knowledge to good use for this crazed tale, which was a huge hit in Spain, but never made it to American soil.



**HORROR (2002).** The sophomore feature from writer/director Dante Tomaselli is an ambitious venture, full of atmosphere and imagination, which also feels vaguely half-baked. A vanload of teens (including DESECRATION's Danny Lopes) escape from a rehab facility and plan to crash at the rural home of a wacko preacher. Meanwhile, this Reverend's daughter Grace (Lizzy Mahon) is being abused by her ultra-religious parents. When the van arrives, they're instantly scared shitless by unexplainable events, with spotty-faced children at the door, a goat roaming the premises, 'shroom-induced hallucinations, and let's not forget those pesky zombies! It's difficult to tell where reality begins or ends, so don't expect much logic as Dante piles on imagery pilfered from every celluloid nightmare — from things hiding under your bed and horrific reflections in the mirror, to an undead army shuffling toward your house. The young actors are fine, but the silliest casting choice is The Amazing Kreskin as Grace's grandpa, because when his nightclub mentalist schtick is worked into the plot, it blows any tension. For a low-budget effort, the visuals are spectacular and there's excellent use of the bleak, wintry backdrop; unfortunately, this type of complex tapestry needs more than 76 minutes to do it justice. Characters are barely developed, weird ideas are left dangling, and — no matter how stylish — it's unsatisfying to watch one-dimensional characters struggling to survive. HORROR is sometimes silly, often damned creepy and always impressive.

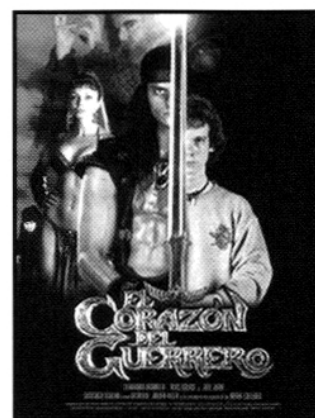
**SAKUYA: SLAYER OF DEMONS** [Sakuya: Yokaiden] (Video Junkie; 2000). This 18th century Japanese action-fantasy from director Tomoo Haraguchi begins with a bang, as a mountaintop erupts and unleashes a bevy of bizarre monsters! When a Samurai Lord perishes while battling these rubbery beasts, his daughter Sakuya (Nozomi Ando) takes up his magical sword. So far, so good, but while this might be a huge technical improvement on cheesy Japanese monsteramas like INFRA-MAN, it lacks their hokey charm and boundless energy. Accompanied by two ninjas and a demon-boy named Taro (who looks like a 10-year-old kid), Sakuya hits the road and

encounters an Evil Puppeteer who turns girls into tiny marionettes, an 8-foot-tall demon cat, undead riders, and finally, the gigantic Spider Queen (who dresses like a Goth Elton John). Regrettably, most of the monster battles are at night, which makes it difficult to appreciate the costumes or choreography. Even worse, when they aren't in combat, it's dull, talky and even introspective. Horrors! The only solid laugh is when annoying Taro is suddenly struck in the head by a bolt of lightning and glows like a Disneyland float. Unfortunately, the little shit survives. This middling dose of monster mayhem has the necessary trappings, but isn't much fun — except for when Sakuya runs into a bunch of friendly forest monsters frolicking in the woods, and I thought I was having a delayed flashback from my LSD days.

**DENTI [Teeth] (Video Junkie; 2000).** It's easy to have viewers squirming if you include dentistry in your scenario, but while this Italian drama doesn't skimp on painful tooth sequences, it's not just for shock value. Instead, they're a conduit into the mind of one man's psychological meltdown. Antonio has had a problem with his immense buck teeth ever since he was a teenager (when he tried to break off his mammoth incisors by pounding them onto a rock!), and as a self-conscious adult (Sergio Rubini), those teeth are still wrecking his life. When Antonio accuses girlfriend Mara (Anita Caprioli) of screwing her dentist, she raps him in the mouth with an ashtray, shatters his teeth, and sends him to the very same doctor that she's humping! Think going to a dentist once a year is bad? Antonio finds himself visiting a different oral surgeon every day — who turn out to be sadists, egotists, idiots, and kitchen butchers. As these trips become increasingly outrageous, pain and past traumas swirl together, amidst memories of his ridiculed childhood, hallucinations of Mara's infidelity, and internal musings about the nature of happiness — culminating in a drunken evening of Bukowski-esque proportions. Director Gabrielle Salvatores (whose output has ranged from the artsy MEDITERRANEO to the cyber-thriller NIRVANA) hauls us from the unflinchingly brutal to the wonderfully surreal, and it's all held together by Rubini's courageous lead performance, which mixes advice from the dead, lost chances and new opportunities into unique portrait of obsession.

**THE WARRIOR'S HEART** [El Corazon Del Guerrero] (2000). This Spanish action-fantasy from director Daniel Monzón

is packed with plot twists that are humorous, bizarre, and more clever than you'd expect. The film begins like any capable CONAN THE BARBARIAN knock-off, with buff warrior Beldar (Joel Joan) hacking his way through opponents and dealing with a crypt full of living disembodied heads, in his quest for a magical jewel. Sounds silly? Yep! But only 10 minutes in, Beldar is cursed by this glowing jewel and wakes up in modern-day Spain. Even worse, he's inside the body of geeky teen Ramon (Fernando Ramallo), who loves D&D and has a gaming character named Beldar! Oops! Has beefy Beldar journeyed into some parallel dimension? Or is unstable Ramon allowing his fantasy realm to intrude on real life? This might sound like fare best reserved for adolescents (HE-MAN meets REVENGE OF THE NERDS), but its execution is dark and adult, particularly when delusional Ramon tries to assassinate a government official — who he believes is an evil sorcerer. As Beldar's barely-clothed warrior/lover Sonja, Neus Asensi is a living, breathing, Robert E. Howard wet dream; while in Ramon's world, she's a prostitute who's stalked by this unhinged kid. Santiago Segura also turns up in dual roles, as a white-bearded wizard and a TV-psychic. It's a likeably ambitious outing, which proves that you can work role-playing games into a script, without making your audience puke.



## Angel Devil

One of a kind, fully jointed  
doll art by Anna Puchalski

See the website for other vampires,  
demons and creepy creatures.





# UNDER GROUND ODDITIES

**CAMERA OBSCURA (2000)** [Fish Eye Films, 1652 El Rito Avenue, Glendale, CA 91208]. Shot on 35mm, this jarring and provocative feature from writer-director Hamlet Sarkissian is impeccably lensed and edited, and looks as slick as any major Hollywood fare. Adam Trese (LAWS OF GRAVITY) stars as Jimmy, a photographer who takes a day job snapping pictures of bloodcaked crime scenes for the LAPD. It's disturbing work, but Jimmy tries to bring his artistic sensibilities to the corpse-laden gig, even as his home life with wife Maria (Ariadna Gil) becomes increasingly tense and he experiences overwrought nightmares. When Jimmy begins to rearrange his crime scenes (turning a gang massacre into a makeshift Last Supper), we know the guy has lost touch with reality. But what begins as a disturbing psychological portrait takes a shift into more convoluted crime territory when a couple of corrupt homicide detectives convince naive Jimmy to be a courier for a drug deal — which, of course, goes all wrong. The story becomes more predictable as it veers from Jimmy's obsession, and though his character can be a bit of a schmuck, Trese gives a solid, uncompromising performance. Despite a few potholes (Gil's ballerina/stripser is strident, which weakens the marital drama), the film is always intriguing and leads to a refreshingly grim climax. Technical aspects are all outstanding, and this feature debut is an impressive achievement.

**GHOUL A-GO-GO (2001)** [P.O. Box 471, Wainscott, NY 11975; [www.geocities.com/ghoulago1313](http://www.geocities.com/ghoulago1313)].

I would've gone ape-shit for this half-hour program back when I was a horror-obsessed l'il kid. Hell, I'd watch it nowadays if my cable outlet carried it! It's a b&w combination of low-rent kids'-show and retro-dance-fest, which mixes music, laughs, crazy film clips, and a trio of old-fashioned horror-hosts. Plus, it won me over during its opening credits, as happy children dance in a cemetery, and when asked "Hey, kids! Whaddaya wanna do?", they reply "Put a head on a stick and have a party!" The hosts are Dracula-wannabe Vlad Tsepis, slow-witted bald hunchback Creighton and a mute invisible man, who force a bunch of kids to dance the Twist, the Pony, the Batusi, et cetera, to horror-themed tunes. There are also hilarious commercial plugs for a (hopefully fictitious) luncheon meat, kitsch musical clips, and Creighton abusing us with disturbing old industrial films — such as PAPER AND I, in which a talking brown-paper-bag takes a feverish boy on a magical journey to see how paper is made! There's even a live musical performance from the perplexed Jonny Chan and the New Dynasty Six. From its ultra-cool spinning logo, to its MAD MONSTER PARTY-on-LSD end credits, this is terrific for late-night drunken viewing, or as a morning-after headache remedy. Best of all, everyone involved seems to be having a ball, and kudos go out to directors Kevin Rice, Kevin Novotny and Matt Hindra for this inspired silliness.



**CRADLE OF FEAR (2001)** [[www.cradleoffear.com](http://www.cradleoffear.com)]. This ballsy fright-fest doesn't waste any time in getting down to its grisly business, as a Goth dude (Dani Filth) kicks off the film by tearing out a throat, ripping open a head and stomping gray matter into the pavement. It's one helluva intro, and writer-director Alex Chandon doesn't let up. It then turns into a four-story anthology, tenuously linked by a weary police inspector and this lame Goth wanker (credited as 'The Man'). In the first, a girl gets all wet for a pierced hunk and takes him home, until he goes demonic on her — leading to a gruesome pregnancy. Second, two gals break into a pad, butcher the owner and turn on each other in the name of greed (with undead repercussions). The third has a couple of wealthy shiteheels running over a homeless bloke, and a later amputated leg with a life of its own. The final (and dumbest) segment follows a kinky web surfer who's instantly addicted to a do-it-yourself Pay-Snuff site, leading to a woefully predictable climax. For an indie project, this 2-hour flick has first-rate production values and special effects, an admirably ambitious agenda, and also takes itself too seriously for its own good. Its weakest aspect is this laughably-pretentious 'Man', who looks more like The Crow's wimpy queer cousin, and demonstrates his power by killing a cat (since that's the only creature on Earth less threatening than himself). He's straight out of a SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE skit, but at least its other villain — an incarcerated hypnotist who's into murder and cannibalism — isn't as pathetic. CRADLE is a silly, gratuitous and entertaining throwback to '70s horror fare, with a level of gore and dementia that's definitely present-day.

**INDUSTRIAL TELEVISION (2001)** [[www.2droogies.com](http://www.2droogies.com)]. The concept behind this Staten Island cable show is simple. Two self-proclaimed "droogies" (Edmund Varuolo and Brian Powell) lounge about their one-sheet encrusted TV-room, getting stoned and vegetating to a brain-rotting array of film clips — including nudie flicks, kitsch shorts, chopsocky brutality, documentary grisliness, and much more. The

video sent to me contained two of their hour-long programs, including their 100th episode, which features a montage of their various openings, celebrity promos and the favorite moments from their four-year run. There's sophomoric humor aplenty during a redubbed supermarket training film, and for Black History Month, the pair dig up the infamous musical number from WONDER BAR, with a black-faced Al Jolson dancing in heaven alongside a chorus line of giant watermelon slices! From emulsion-scratched trailers, to vomit performance art and anti-drug propaganda, their finds are hilarious and jawdropping. The only downside is the occasional, over-long industrial film — which even puts the hosts to sleep! These guys may act like burn-outs, but they obviously put a shitload of effort into their selection of clips; so kick back, light up, crack open a bottle, and pay these droogs a visit.

**CONCEALMENT (2001)** [[www.davidstewartproductions.gq.nu](http://www.davidstewartproductions.gq.nu)]. Mystery, romance and money are combined in this Charlottesville, Virginia-lensed feature from director-writer-cinematographer-editor David Stewart (who starred in Eric Thornett's 23 HOURS). Melissa Desper stars as Pia, a seemingly ordinary young woman who hits town, sets up a home, and has her share of dark secrets. Brad (David Stewart; yep, the guy also acts in it!) is a disgruntled tree cutter who runs into Pia on the street and within hours, the two are shacking up in bed. Meanwhile, some mysterious old fart (David Harscheid) is searching for Pia, and sends a motley variety of 'company' agents to locate her. The first half-hour is slow going, but it kicks into high gear once Pia's on the run from these sadistic creeps. On a technical level, the film looks good and there's some cool fight choreography, but whenever the actors are allowed to emote (like Pia and Brad's insipid love story), I felt like taking a cheese grater to their faces. Both leads are fine during action scenes, but their passion for each other has all the believability of Liza Minnelli and that gay-looking dude she just married. A lot of the dialogue falls flat, but the story (fueled by a wad of stolen cash) is tightly constructed, with a couple good twists helping to conceal its weaker moments.

**B AND BELOW; WE'RE NOT IN HOLLYWOOD ANYMORE (2001)**

[[www.cameron.edu/~mattj/below](http://www.cameron.edu/~mattj/below)]. Most mainstream moviegoers don't realize that there's a burgeoning world of indie filmmakers who scrape up their own paltry financing and put just as much energy into their efforts as any Hollywood slob. This 47-minute documentary from director Matt Jenkins profiles a trio of these do-it-yourself auteurs. There's NYC's Pat Bishow, the twisted talent behind EL FRENETICO AND GO GIRL; Oklahoma-bred Steve Bentley, responsible for horror flicks like IMAGES AFTER MIDNIGHT; and Dallas' Richard Catt, whose films include ZOMBIE NIGHT and BLACKWOOD EVIL. The film follows a simple format: Ask a question ("Where do your ideas come from?" "Who is your audience?") and intercut the responses — with film clips offering proof of their (alleged) talent. Bishow is the most likeable of this threesome, with a good sense of humor, an appreciation of his fans, and the best footage (his trippy music video for Hypnolovewheel's "Wow" is a knockout). In comparison, the other two are...well, pompous amateurs who make Bishow's fare look like Kubrick. Sadly, these two are oblivious to the fact that their grainy, home-movie-level work is worthless. One of 'em even proudly boasts of not using a script! Jenkins doesn't comment on these artists or their work, but if he wanted to make a more insightful portrait of this phenomenon, he should've kept Bishow and ditched these other clowns, since there are a lot of talented folks who could've used the exposure instead. As it is, this only proves that two-thirds of these moviemaking-wannabes would be better off returning to their Wal-Mart day jobs.

**HEADCHEESE (2001)** [[www.headcheesemovie.com](http://www.headcheesemovie.com)]. Co-directors Justin Meeks and Duane Graves display a welcome enthusiasm with this black-and-white, Texas-shot horror short, but it only leaves you wanting more. A demon-obsessed hitchhiker (pretentiously named Legion, and played by Meeks) waits along a dusty road with a six pack in hand. But this "Elvis on crack" wacko (complete with wrap-around shades) is actually one dangerous fucker. He roams the rural wasteland, takes no shit, destroys a cross, fiddles with animal bones, hallucinates in the wilderness, and initiates a masochistic finale — all while droning on in pretentious voice-over. Unfortunately, this 22-minute short is far too slight. It sets up an intriguing lead character and a potentially explosive situation, but never offers either the depth that they deserve. Why should we give a damn about this idiot and his traumas? I'm still not sure. The soundtrack ranges from hard-driven tunes to grating noise, but the film's high point is Graves' 16mm photography, which gives this rambling outing the gritty backwoods atmosphere of some lost grindhouse classic. But in the end, it's all grim style, without much genuine substance.

# ROTTEN COTTON

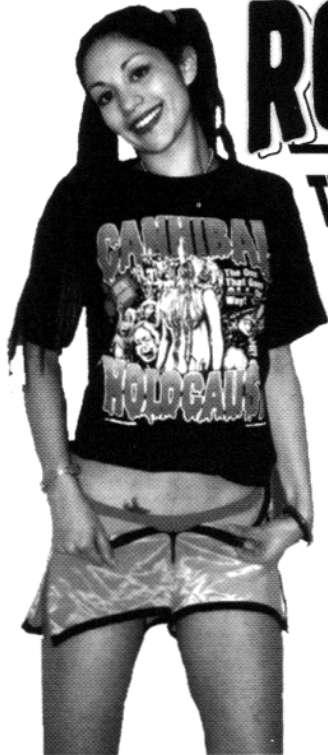
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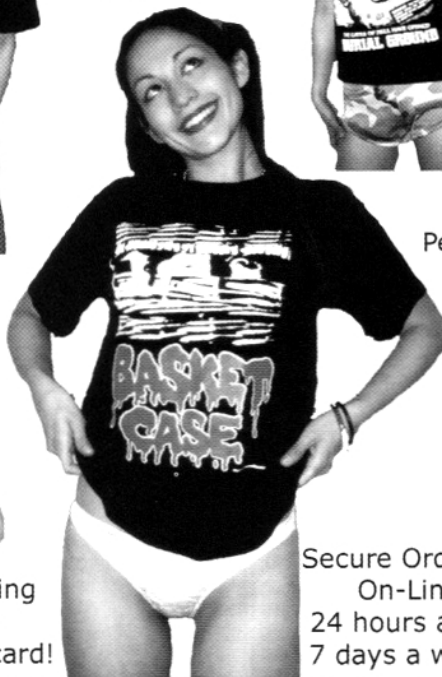
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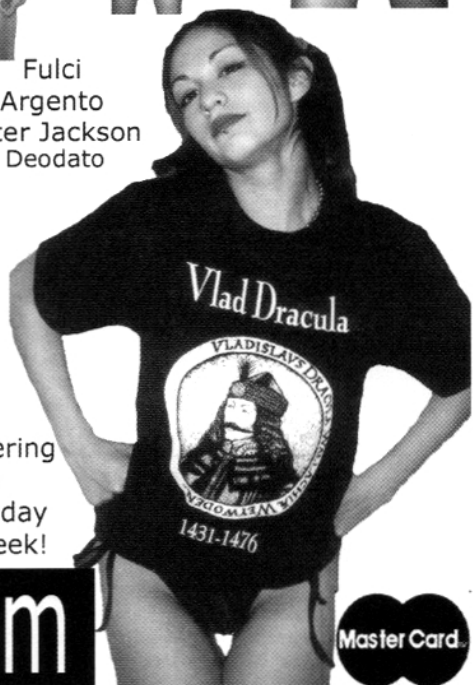
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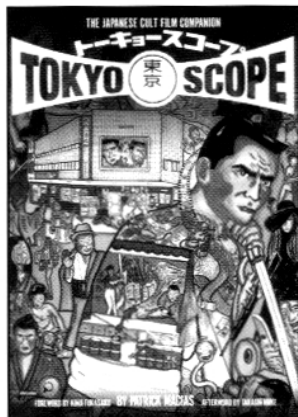
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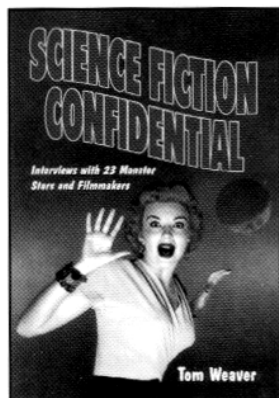
# Shocking Books

**TOKYOSCOPE: THE JAPANESE CULT FILM COMPANION** by Patrick Macias (Cadence Books; \$19.95). This amazing new softcover tackles the huge (and, on this side of the Pacific, barely known) world of Japanese cult cinema — from old classics to today's most cutting-edge titles. It's divided into various chapters devoted to Giant Monsters, Yakuza, Horror movies, Disaster flicks, and much more.

Hey, there's even an entire section devoted to the unforgettable Sonny Chiba — King of Pain! Author Patrick Macias then offers an insightful overview of each topic, along with several reviews and performer profiles. Interviews are also sprinkled throughout, including Takashi Miike, Kinji Fukasaku, Riki Takeuchi, and Yoshimitsu Banno (director of *GODZILLA VS. THE SMOG MONSTER*). When it comes to Japanese cinema, Macias certainly knows his territory, but doesn't let his intelligence get in the way of the book's enthusiasm and sense of humor. He also takes off on some weird and wonderful tangents, such as an interview with the people responsible for the US re-edit/release of *SHOGUN ASSASSIN*. *TOKYOSCOPE* is highly recommended, whether you're a hardcore film fan or curious newcomer.



**ART OF DARKNESS: THE CINEMA OF DARIO ARGENTO** edited by Chris Gallant (FAB Press; [www.fabpress.com](http://www.fabpress.com); \$39.95). FAB has outdone themselves with this hefty new 320-page hardcover devoted to the legacy of Dario Argento. No question, it's an impressive book, packed with hundreds of photographs, promotional materials from around the world, and gorgeous color reproductions. The book is worth it for the sumptuous graphics alone, but when it comes to the text, the result is more problematic. Although editor Gallant seems to love all of Dario's films (even the abysmal *PHANTOM OF THE OPERA*), this is no simple fan tribute, but instead embraces the most pretentious Master's Thesis-style prose. Regarding *INFERNO*: "This epistemological and ontological crisis is sublimated onto a complex stream of dark theology." Phew! I personally have nothing against long-winded intellectual claptrap, but could you make it halfway entertaining for the average reader too? Gallant's dry writing style lacks the passion necessary to convince a reader to rush out and rent an Argento flick, so thank goodness he enlisted several skillful contributors for the section of reviews, such as Mitch Davis' enthusiastic analysis of *INFERNO* and Stephen Thrower's dissection of *SUSPIRIA*. They lighten the overall tone of the book and give it a much-needed diversity. Horror fans might be familiar with Dario's cinematic derangement, but his work remains woefully unappreciated in the US. Hopefully, this fine volume will help spread the word.



**SCIENCE FICTION CONFIDENTIAL** by Tom Weaver (McFarland, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640; 1-800-253-2187; \$42.50 ppd). Tom Weaver delivers another in his long line of fascinating interview-compilation books, with this one aimed primarily at the sci-fi genre of the '50s and '60s. He's dug up some genuinely obscure personalities for this volume, and while I recognized many of the names (Denny Miller, Dan O'Herlihy, David Hedison), and even more of the faces, several folks didn't ring any bells — such as Eve Brent (who played Jane in 1958's *TARZAN'S FIGHT FOR LIFE*). But regardless of their fame, they all have amazing stories to tell! Some of my favorite portions include Anthony Cardoza's prime anecdotes about the making of *THE BEAST OF YUCCA FLATS* and actress Phoebe Dorin discussing

her longtime friendship with *WILD WILD WEST* co-star Michael Dunn. As usual, Weaver has done his advance research, and knows just as much about his subjects' lives as they do — which keeps the Q&A's interesting and informative, while continually unearthing odd tidbits. Hell, I didn't realize that the producer of 1958's *THE BLOB* also made the Mark IV Rapture propaganda franchise! Accompanied by over 100 photographs, this is a terrific read for any sci-fi flick fan.

**THE DEVIL ON SCREEN** by Charles P. Mitchell (McFarland, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640; 1-800-253-2187; \$53.95 ppd). The Devil has always been a memorable character, as well as the ultimate screen villain. In bad films, he can be hilarious; in schlocky films, he can be silly; and in great films, Lucifer can be truly frightening and thought provoking (whether you believe in all of that Christian hokum or not). This delightful 337-page hardcover is an A-to-Z history of the Devil's feature film appearances, from the silent era to the present. For each movie, author Mitchell offers a plot synopsis, analysis, comments on its Satanic performance, and even notable devilish quotes — while the range of its films is genuinely impressive. Sure, there's the expected mainstream fare, like *THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK*, but Mitchell also unearths plenty of doozies, from Vincent Price's interpretation in *THE STORY OF MANKIND* to Mickey Rooney's comic mugging in *THE PRIVATE LIVES OF ADAM AND EVE*, as well as Danny Elfman's musical turn in *FORBIDDEN ZONE*. It all adds up to a sinfully entertaining reference guide.

**CAR CRASH CULTURE** edited by Mikita Brottman (Palgrave; \$19.95). This eclectic collection of essays tackles our fascination with automobile crashes by mixing personal recollections, detailed forensic studies of accident victims, and celebrity fatalities such as Jackson Pollack and Albert Camus. It's an odd concept, and while editor Mikita Brottman has rounded up solid contributors, it's also a bit hit-and-miss. Some chapters are gruesome, others unremarkable, and I abandoned a few duds without finishing them. Still, there are a lot of highlights, including Kenneth Anger's tribute to Hollywood's deadly "Kar Krash Karma," Jack Sargeant's examination of crashes in '60s pop tunes, while *Car Crash Cinema* is embraced in chapters on *HEART LIKE A WHEEL*, Godard's *CONTEMPT*, the driver's ed film *SIGNAL 30*, and (no surprise) Cronenberg's *CRASH*. By far, the most intriguing section is aimed at crash conspiracies, such as the "truth" behind the deaths of Princess Diana and Mary Jo Kopechne, the infamous "Paul (McCartney) is Dead" myth and the history of JFK's presidential limo. Interesting, but a severely mixed bag.

**BAD BLOOD: AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO PSYCHO CINEMA** by Christian Fuchs (Creation Books; [www.creationbooks.com](http://www.creationbooks.com); \$19.95). Serial killers and mass murderers have been a longtime cinematic staple, and this absorbing volume covers them all. But what makes this book particularly fascinating is that it not only covers murder-themed movies, but their connection to real life events. In fact, the majority of the book is devoted to comparing actual case histories with how each killer's story has been adapted onto film. Nearly 50 murderers and their screen counterparts are covered in A (Jack Henry Abbott) to Z (The Zodiac Killer) fashion — from old-time outlaws like Ma Barker, to legendary psychos Gein and Gacy, as well as many obscure killers from around the world. The remaining chapters are devoted to specific types of on-screen murderers — serial killers, psychopathic criminals, homicidal gals and couples, et cetera — with insightful essays and spot-on reviews. Fuchs is an intelligent writer, and I enjoyed his continual disdain for spineless American TV-movies, while championing extraordinary films like *COMBAT SHOCK*, and *FREEWAY II: CONFESSIONS OF A TRICK BABY*. An entertaining and informative guide to the best, the worst and the most delightfully trashy aspects of killer cinema.



**WHITE ZOMBIE: ANATOMY OF A HORROR FILM** by Gary D. Rhodes (McFarland, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640; 1-800-253-2187; \$69.00 ppd). This outstanding hardcover gives new meaning to the term 'obsessive.' Where else can you find 360 pages devoted to a 70-year-old low-budget movie, unknown to modern horror fans? That's what you might initially think, if you've never seen 1932's *WHITE ZOMBIE*; but author Gary D. Rhodes is unquestionably a fan. He's done one hell of a job, meticulously researching the history of this premiere entry in zombie cinema, and delivers everything you'd ever want to know about this cult-classic. There's analysis of its imagery and narrative, tidbits about the filming, info on financial and distribution problems, critical reception and re-examination, and advertising schemes. Plus, every time you think Rhodes has gone too far, he takes it a step further — like a city-by-city breakdown of its initial theatrical run and a detailed bio of its director, Victor Halperin. Some chapters stumble into dull trivia, but this is still an astounding piece of work, filled with over 200 photos and vintage ad slicks.



**W.D. RICHTER** *Continued from PAGE 38*

Richter: Again, I didn't write it for Streisand, I wrote it for this character Cheryl, this lonely, confused, slightly deluded housewife, and one of her little fantasies is she's going to rise up from her little tract house by writing country-western songs on her piano in her living room, which was clearly not one of her gifts. So when it reached that moment in the script, I felt I had to put some example of the lyrics on the page just to suggest how bad the songs really should be. I don't write music, I didn't hear a song to it, and I thought it would be dealt with by the professionals when they get there. But Streisand thought the lyrics were just fine and they hired a guy to write music to it! It was the only song I had ever written and it was in effect being recorded by Streisand! And as a result of that, you have to become a member of ASCAP (Music Publishing Company), so I'm a card carrying member. I wrote one song, Barbra Streisand [sang it], I'm retired! I'm not gonna push my luck! It was totally a surreal experience, I had to be on the set that day. I said, "I have to see this!"

**SC:** You had also written one of John Carpenter's most memorable films, *BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA*, which was also one of the few times kung fu was successfully mixed with horror. How did you get involved in the project?

Richter: There was a script called *BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA* that was written by a couple of guys who had left the project. It was set in the gaslight era in San Francisco, and it had the concept of an underground, mysterious Chinese underworld. They were looking for re-writes. Producer Larry Gordon gave me the script and I had an intuitive feeling that I wouldn't be good writing this thing if it were to stay in the gaslight era. I thought it would be much spookier, and certainly much more unnerving to me, if this underworld lurked beneath the streets of contemporary San Francisco, so the next time I went there I might think: "What's under that manhole cover?" That was a simple thing to pitch and I figured it was either going to be yes

or no, and Larry said he felt it was absolutely great. "It's a no brainer," that's one of his favorite things to say. There was an impending writer's strike, so I read a lot of books on Chinese mythology, I read them furiously while I was writing the script because I had to finish the script in a relatively short amount of time to rework the material. I got it in just under the wire and they liked it. We got John Carpenter, and the strike wasn't long, so he was in the early, early stages of pre-production when the strike was over. I came back on, we had a couple days of meetings, I did a two week polish and he did the movie. It went very fast.

**SC:** Also in the mid-eighties, you directed *BUCKAROO BANZAI*, which is now finally on DVD, and Earl Mac Rauch just signed a three book deal with Simon and Schuster to write new adventures of *Buckaroo*. Will you write with him as well?

Richter: It's kind of a peculiar deal. Earl is the author of the books, but I've always worked with him and he's always wanted me to work with him closely as a sounding board. That's how it started with the original *BUCKAROO BANZAI* script when he proposed it to my wife and me. We were all young in Los Angeles, and he told me the story about a guy named Buckaroo Bandy, who was gonna be kind of a cowboy singer. We said, "That's great. Here's \$1,500, start writing the script." Every time he brought us pages, we'd make comments and he'd make changes. Everything changed...the storyline, there were all these false starts and then one day he became Buckaroo Banzai. Mac said, "Ah...I'm gonna change that," and we said, "Don't you dare!" We worked that way through the script. He's definitely the writer, but I function as a close writing associate who doesn't really get writing credit because Mac is really writing, it's his stuff. The same thing with the book deal. The publisher wants me involved, Mac wants me involved, but he's the novelist. So I guess I'm his personal editor. I'm there in that very close relationship. I give him as many ideas as he gives me, but he's the one who puts them on the

page and makes them talk. It's his prose style, and I just comment on it and try to help him change it.

**SC:** What do you feel it is about certain stories like *BUCKAROO BANZAI* that inspire such slavish devotion from legions of sci-fi geeks?

Richter: Well, the thing that amazes me is that Buckaroo's fans are not just geeks. I find they're a much more eclectic assemblage of people. There's a sensibility it cuts across, and I can't predict anymore who is going to like it and why they're going to like it, but it does get under people's skin...It hits people in a lot of ways, but the best way it hits them is when it appeals to this sense of community that says you and your friends can do good things, do decent things, and have a ball doing it. There's something undeniably appealing about it, and that's what caused all the fan-clubs to come together. They talked to each other in code names. It's like play acting in a fun way, and that's why on the DVD we treat it as if Buckaroo is real, so that you're saying to the fans: "Come on board. It's a big fantasy world. Have fun with it." I know that's part of the intoxicating appeal of certain kinds of science fiction. It's like joining Captain Midnight's club, you can get a decoder ring!

**SC:** Why do you feel many of the movies you've written didn't do well when they were first released, but now people look back at many of them as gems and films that deserve a second look?

Richter: That's a very hard question to ask of the person who authored them. It doesn't sound right to say they were ahead of their time because that implies that I had some great insight. I think the world is more willing to embrace [them] in flying in the face of trends of huge movies with simplistic storylines, there's definitely a willingness to look at more eccentric material. Even television commercials are much more bizarre than they used to be. So there's a sensibility loose in the culture that doesn't run screaming from something like *SLITHER*. ☺

**LEE FROST** *Continued from PAGE 29*

Frost: Well, I wrote *RACE WITH THE DEVIL* in about three weeks because I really had to get it done quickly — I don't know why, I guess I wanted to get it done and get it out in the marketplace. That was a script that I really enjoyed writing. Normally, I don't know — I never wrote on the clock, never worked on it full-time. When I got an idea, I just sat down and worked on it.

**SC:** Bud Ekins was the stunt coordinator on several of your films. He doubled for Steve McQueen in *THE GREAT ESCAPE* and *BULLITT*, and I heard that McQueen actually did some stunt riding for you in *DIXIE DYNAMITE*.

Frost: Yes, he doubled for Warren Oates in the motorcycle scenes. McQueen was friends with Ekins. He spent the night at Ekins' house, and they came out together the next day. I said, "Hey, good to see you. Let's go. Get on the bike, start it up, I'll tell you what I want." He was a nice guy, very quiet. We paid him stunt salary.

**SC:** One movie of yours I've been trying to track down for years is *THE BOOB TUBE STRIKES AGAIN*. What's the story behind that film?

Frost: I was writing *RACE WITH THE DEVIL*, and some producers had this picture that was the funniest thing they'd ever seen. I went over, met with them, read it, and said, "OK, I'll tell you what you guys should do — go in your

room there, read this script, and circle all the laughs. Every line and every situation that gets a laugh or even a chuckle, circle it for me." They said, "OK, we'll do that!" They came out about a half an hour later — "There are none!" I said, "That's the problem with your picture!" So I rewrote the picture, added some jokes, and shot it. I have no idea what's happened to it.

**SC:** I know you worked on the Daniel Cady production *DOLLY DEAREST*, but did you direct anything in the 19-year gap between *DIXIE DYNAMITE* and *PRIVATE OBSESSION*?

Frost: Yes, I did a weird picture in Tennessee called *THE DISC JOCKEY*, which was written by a guy named George Deaton. He had a movie he had to make, a story he had to tell — something to give his life meaning. It was about some Martians who are looking for a place to land, and they see this disc jockey for a radio station driving along down the road. They beam him up and talk to him — some dialogue takes place on the spaceship — and then they beam him back down, his car crashes, and he dies. The Martians bring him back to life, and then they leave. The disc jockey meets a girl and falls in love with her, but he has now developed — and he doesn't know how, because he can't remember the Martian incident — the ability to shift gears in his mind when he's in trouble and go back to the start of any situa-

tion. So he repeats everything, and fixes his life by changing it. Does this make any sense to you so far?

**SC:** I'm following it, but I wouldn't say it makes sense.

Frost: That's about all it did for me, too — but I directed it, I'm ashamed to admit. He didn't have enough money for a spaceship, but I did it anyway. [*THE DISC JOCKEY* was released in 1983 as E.S.P.]

**SC:** What are you doing these days?

Frost: Right now, I'm writing a novel. It's my first book, and it's a challenge-and-a-half to figure out how to do it, but I'm about 280 pages into it. I've been writing it for about a year. Not a year full-time, but I'll take a month or two off now and then. I think it'll be done in August, and then I'll be looking for an agent.

**SC:** How many agents have you had over the years?

Frost: None.

**SC:** But you're in the Directors Guild, right?

Frost: No. I'm in the Writers Guild, but not the Directors Guild.

**SC:** So you weren't offered directing jobs for TV?

Frost: No. I wouldn't direct TV anyway. Let me explain the world to you. It's changed. We're not the same people we used to be, and it's not the same industry it used to be. We were making little movies, grinding them out, and putting them on the screen. Well, you can't put them on the screen anymore, so there's no reason to make little movies anymore. Where are you going to play them? I could've made porno movies, but I didn't want to do that. So I just stopped — as did most of us. ☺

Special thanks to David Friedman and Mike Vraney.



## MAGS, ZINES &amp; SMALL-PRESS PUBLICATIONS

**ALTERNATIVE CINEMA #19** (P.O. Box 371, Glenwood, NJ 07418; \$20 for 4 issues). Focusing on indie film & video, this glossy 36-page mag includes a profile of sexploitation cutie Misty Mundae, Q&A's with Julie Strain and producer Sam Sherman, articles promoting their own straight-to-video releases, and plenty of gratuitous pix of half-naked 'actresses'.

**ARTERIES #3** (Available in the U.S. at [www.dracula.com](http://www.dracula.com), and in Europe from [www.mediapublications.co.uk](http://www.mediapublications.co.uk)). A slick, entertaining digest devoted to exploitation cinema. This 76-page magazine reviews dozens of videos and dvds — including new releases, classic EuroSchlock and lots of Asian dementia.

**ASIAN CULT CINEMA #33-34** (P.O. Box 16-1919, Miami, FL 33116; \$6 each, or 6 issues for \$30). The newest issues of this glossy, 64-page digest contain excellent articles on Edogawa Rambo movies, Asian news and reviews, regular columns by Max Allan Collins and Ric Meyers, sexy pictorials, plus interviews with director Hisayasu Sato and Simon Yam. It's essential reading for Asian film fans!

**ASKEW REVIEWS #9** (Denis Sheehan, P.O. Box 684, Hanover, MA 02339; \$2). A cool, 32-page zine that overflows with amusing video, dvd, book, and music reviews, as well as personal essays. Check them out at: [www.askewreviews.com](http://www.askewreviews.com).

**BRUTARIAN #34** (P.O. Box 210, Accokeek, MD 20607; \$16 for 4 issues). An amusing magazine crammed with music & book reviews, cheap jokes, comics, the always-amusing "Six Pack Theater" video column (complete with a beer-can rating system), plus interviews with Iggy Pop & Joe Lansdale.

**CHILLER THEATRE #15** (P.O. Box 23, Rutherford, NJ 07070; \$23 for 4 issues). This glossy magazine is one of my favorites, and their latest issue is themed around *Planet of the Apes* — including interviews with Linda Harrison, Kim Hunter and director Don Taylor — plus Q&A's with Richard Kiel and *Blade Runner* babe Joanna Cassidy. Highly recommended!

**FILM GEEK #6** (P.O. Box 501113, Tulsa, OK 74150; \$1 ppd). This "lo-fi" zine-digest packs its 28-pages with reviews of cult movies, books and zines, plus an analysis of *Scream* and killer seafood flicks. Opinionated, humorous and only "1 lousy buck!"

**HAPPYLAND #11** (141 29th Street, Apt. 2F, Brooklyn, NY 11232; \$5, cash only). Selwyn Harris has a lengthy history of hating *Shock Cinema*, but he likes my wife's dolls, so he must have some good taste after all. His newest, 70-page issue contains articles on incest porn, cheerleader movies, Brooklyn "whack shacks", and lots more. Vicious and hilarious.

**HEADPRESS #22** (40 Rossall Avenue, Radcliffe, Manchester, M26 1JD, Great Britain; \$14.99). David Kerekes' incredible 176-page "journal of sex religion death" delivers another dose of fine articles, including the controversial TV-show *Ghostwatch*, interviews with Bruce LaBruce & James Elroy, and loads of reviews. Its highlight is an exhaustive profile of Factory 2000 — its filmmakers, starlets and no-budget fetish-outrages. Recommended! Check out [www.headpress.com](http://www.headpress.com).

**LITTLE SHOPPE OF HORRORS #15** (Richard Klemensen, P.O. Box 3107, Des Moines, Iowa 50316; \$7.95). It's always a treat to see a new issue of this hefty, informative mag. This edition of "the journal of classic British horror films" focuses on *The Curse of the Werewolf* (including Q&A's with Oliver Reed and director Terence Fisher), plus an interview with hottie Julie Ege. A must-have for any Hammer-fan!

**MICRO-FILM #4** (Jason Pankoke, Opteryx Press, P.O. Box 45, Campaign, IL 61824; \$10 for 3 issues). An entertaining 40-page mag devoted to the wide world of truly-independent filmmaking. In addition to several dozen reviews, articles focus on films such as John Michael McCarthy's *Superstarlet A.D.* and Coke Sams & Bruce Arntson's *Existo*. Recommended!

**NAGUAL #8** (purchase info: [nagualmag@aol.com](mailto:nagualmag@aol.com)). This looks like a terrific, 52-page mag devoted to cult and horror cinema. My only problem? It's in French,

and my foreign language skills are nonexistent. It includes an interview with director Enzo G. Castellari, plus articles on Jacques Tourneur, Natasha Gregson Wagner, EC comics, and the luscious Linda Hayden.

**ROASTING RODERICK #7** (Parker Anderson, P.O. Box 1285, Prescott, AZ 86302). Well-written but badly-Xeroxed, this old-school zine reviews a few dozen videos — from B-movie horror and direct-to-video swill to family films! Enthusiastic but kinda slight.

**SLEAZOID EXPRESS #4** (P.O. Box 620, Old Chelsea Station, NY, NY 10011; \$10 w/checks made out to Bill Landis). This kick-ass zine revels in '60s and '70s grindhouse fare, and packs its 70 pages with cool reviews and info. We get lengthy critiques of 42nd Street gems, classic porn, EuroTrash delights, Bob Cresse flicks, the infamous *Manson* documentary, as well as a Q&A with director Paul Leder (*I Dismember Mama*). Highly recommended!

**STAY SICK! #1-2** (Jack Jensen, Poste Restante, DK-4200 Slagelse, Denmark; \$5 apiece, or \$8 for both issues). This thick digest from Denmark is devoted to the wide world of "horror/weirdo/Hong Kong/komix/splatter/attitude" and is crammed with reviews of old and new cinematic dementia. Alas, the mag is primarily in Danish (#2 contains 8 pages of English language reviews), so it's a tad difficult to read.

**TRASH TIMES #10** (Rich Behrens, P.O. Box 248, Glenview, IL 60025; \$2 ppd). The newest edition of this cool 28-page film-'n'-music digest includes essays on biker movies and bloodletting, an interview with the legendary Herschell Gordon Lewis, plus dozens of movie, music and print reviews.

**WORLDLY REMAINS #5** (P.O. Box 8008, Universal City, CA 91618; \$18 for 4-issues). This 64-page "pop culture" mag mixes obscure music and movies into a glossy, well-written package. The latest edition includes lengthy video & music reviews, plus interviews with director Steve DeJarnatt (*Miracle Mile*) and musicians Ed Cassidy & Jay Ferguson. Great stuff!

## VIDEO / DVD DISTRIBUTORS

**BIJOUFLIX**, 5632 Van Nuys Blvd. #186, Van Nuys, CA 91401. A cool source for video CD's, including horror, exploitation, cult craziness, and classic gems. Check out their selection at: [www.BijouFlix.com](http://www.BijouFlix.com).

**BLACKEST HEART MEDIA**, P.O. Box 3376, Antioch, CA 94531-3376. Shawn's kick-ass catalog overflows with crazed videos, t-shirts, comics, & CD's, and it's only three lousy dollars. Check 'em out at: [www.blackestheart.com](http://www.blackestheart.com). Recommended!

**BLOODGORE**, P.O. Box 543, Iselin, NJ 08830. Four stamps and an age statement gets you their cool catalog, packed with imported horror, gore, Mondo movies, and assorted cinematic sleaze.

**DIABOLIK DVD**. An excellent on-line source for imported dvds. They have it all, from cult classics and Asian oddities, to the weirdest horror from around the world. Check 'em out at: [www.diabolikdvd.com](http://www.diabolikdvd.com).

**EUROPEAN TRASH CINEMA**, P.O. Box 12161, Spring, TX 77391-2161. Craig's \$3 catalog is crammed with excellent quality overseas oddities — from arthouse rarities to sexy sizzlers. ETC is on-line at: [www.diabolik.demon.co.uk](http://www.diabolik.demon.co.uk). Recommended!

**EYE TV / INTRAVENOUS VIDEO**, Tony Pradlik, 14 Fieldstone Dr. #348, Hartsdale, NY 10530. A wild catalog filled with low-sleaze, high-art & music. Head to: <http://members.aol.com/rcknrex/collect/index.htm>.

**GRAVEDIGGER VIDEO**, Robert Plante, 1372 Crane St., Schenectady, NY 12303. An ultra-cool selection of obscure videos, including tons of '70s drive-in gems! Check out: [www.gravediggervideo.com](http://www.gravediggervideo.com).

**JUST FOR THE HELL OF IT**, P.O. Box 19, Dept. SC, Butler, NJ 07405. Only \$3 gets you their incredible catalog (checks made out to Mike Decker) featuring the best and rarest from the grindhouse & drive-in era! Highly recommended!

**LUMINOUS FILM & VIDEO WURKS**, P.O. Box 1047, Dept. SC, Medford, NY 11763. An incredible array of sexploitation, arthouse fare, and import dvds; plus a kickass assortment of overseas books & mags. Get their newest titles at: [www.lfvw.com](http://www.lfvw.com).

**SHOCKING VIDEOS**, Mark Johnston, HC-77 Box 111, Hinton, WV 25951. A mind-roasting selection of video oddities from around the world, and \$3 gets you their catalog, packed with cult faves! Highly recommended! Email: [shockingvideos@citynet.net](mailto:shockingvideos@citynet.net)

**SOMETHING WEIRD VIDEO**, P.O. Box 33664, Seattle, WA 98133. A mind-boggling catalog of sexploitation, kitsch shorts, Deuce faves, and much more! Mike Vraney is always digging up insanely rare new titles, so go to: [www.somethingweird.com](http://www.somethingweird.com).

**TAPES OF TERROR**, c/o P. Riggs, 11430 Mullins Dr., Dept. SC, Houston, TX 77035-2632. A terrific collec-

tion of horror & cult oddities. Their catalog is \$2, or you can visit: [www.morticiasmorgue.com/tot.html](http://www.morticiasmorgue.com/tot.html).

**UNEARTHLY VIDEO**, Dept. G, P.O. Box 681914, Orlando, FL 32868-1914. Send \$2 for their new catalog, overflowing with horror, exploitation, cult flicks, and adult sleaze.

**VIDEO JUNKIE**, P.O. Box 691055, Stockton, CA 95269-1055. Packed with some of the weirdest videos from around the globe, including imported horror, sicko sleaze and rare UK comedies. They're always unearthing new gems, so go to: [www.vidjunkie.com](http://www.vidjunkie.com).

**VIDEO SEARCH OF MIAMI**, P.O. Box 16-1917, Miami, FL 33116. An outstanding mix of rare titles, including giallos, sexploitation, Asian dementia, and foreign gems — now available on VHS and video disc! Visit [www.vsom.com](http://www.vsom.com) or write for their free catalog.

**VIDEO WASTELAND**, P.O. Box 81551, Cleveland, OH 44181-1551. In addition to their excellent mail-order video rental service, VW sells loads of rare collectibles — including posters, mags, soundtracks, and more! They're on-line at: [www.videowasteland.com](http://www.videowasteland.com).

**WITCHING HOUR VIDEO**, P.O. Box 21744, Dept. SC, Lexington, KY 40522-1744. Packed with video horror, sleaze, sexploitation, and cult rarities; plus they now stock import dvds! Their catalog is \$4 or head to: [www.witchinghourvideo.com](http://www.witchinghourvideo.com).

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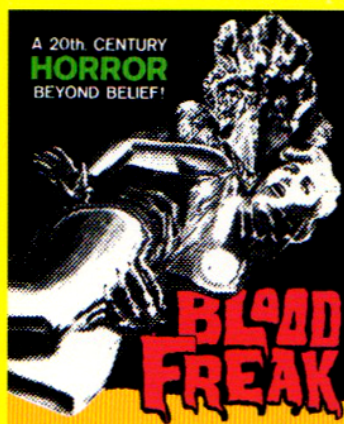
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directed by Steve Hawkes and Brad Grinter

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**CURSE OF THE ALPHA STONE**

1972 • color • directed by Stewart Malleon

Abe Adams (JIM SCOTLIN) is a university-professor-teaching-genetics by day and a part-time-mad-doctor-experimenting-with-alchemy at night. He's also something of a baby-faced stud. But the real sexual fireworks start when a mixture of chemicals, electricity, and mysticism turns powder into a glowing stone — specifically, "a philosopher's stone" — the sole function of which seems to turn people into sex fiends.

Another deranged regional obscurity unearthed by JEFFREY C. HOGUE that will leave most viewers with their mouths agape and a feeling that the end of the world must be near. #7766 VHS • \$15



**MONSTER**

**A GO-GO!**



**MONSTER A GO GO**

1965 • b&w

produced by H.G. Lewis and Bill Rebane

What happens when a film started by the director of *The Giant Spider Invasion* is finished by HERSCHELL GORDON LEWIS, the man who made *Two Thousand Maniacs*? Yup, you get *Monster A Go Go*, a screwy sci-fi obscurity in which an astronaut goes up, but a 10-foot, cruste-faced creature comes back. Starring real-life giant Henry "Horace" Hite as the Spaceman Who Scares Chicago, and spewing radiation that leaves his victims "shriveled up like a prune," the lumbering galoot stalks sexy sunbathers, strangles scientists, and attacks twist-party teens. And because he's about to "contaminate everybody within a radius of 50 miles," the military desperately tries to corner him in a deserted stretch of sewer tunnel until an absurdly surreal ending turns everything upside down.... #7764 VHS • \$15

**DOCTOR GORE**

1973 • color • directed by J.G. Patterson Jr.

The Perfect Woman. Some Assembly Required.

Deeply unhinged over the death of his wife, plastic surgeon and part-time mad doctor DON BRANDON immediately seeks a new mate. Bypassing traditional courtship rituals, the love-starved lunatic first tries to bring a pretty corpse back to life in the basement of his North Carolina castle. When that fails, Doctor Brandon becomes *Doctor Gore* as he switches to Plan B: custom-building the girl of his dreams from body parts severed from sexy young gals. Behaving like a stud version of Jack the Ripper, the creepy doc first seduces, then dissects a variety of women he dates, taking the most perfect pieces from each until — viola! — he's stitched together and brought to life a centerfold style creation named Anitra. But though he thinks he's created the ultimate love slave, Anitra has other ideas.... #7767 VHS • \$15

**DOCTOR GORE**



**Asylum of Satan**

**ASYLUM OF SATAN**

1971 • color • directed by William B. Girdler

Concert pianist Lucina Martin (CARLA BORELLI) finds herself trapped "among strange people experiencing terrifying things" at Pleasant Hill Hospital under the care of Dr. Jason Specter (CHARLES KISSINGER) who won't tell her why she's there or exactly what she's suffering from. And when her fiancé, Chris Duncan (NICK JOLLEY), isn't allowed to see her, he shows up with a reluctant detective only to find Pleasant Hills boarded up and deserted except for a groundskeeper who looks just like Dr. Specter. But after finding a severed head lying in the greenhouse, Duncan realizes he better get inside before Lucina is sacrificed to a creature straight from the fiery depths!

Fun, dumb, backwoods booga-booga shot in Jefferson County, Kentucky. #7769 VHS • \$15

**THE WONDERFUL LAND OF OZ**

1969 • color • directed by Barry Mahon

This wholesome, goofy, eminently G-rated film-for-the-whole-family was, in fact, produced and directed by BARRY MAHON who churned out tons of sexploitation nudies during the Sixties. The *Wonderful Land of Oz*, an ambitious, enjoyable, wacky little musical (!!!) full of colorfully grotesque charm.

But instead of Dorothy and Toto, there's little Tip and Jack the Pumpkinhead who flee from his wicked witch-like stepmother to Emerald City which is being invaded by a "bunch of silly girls" led by the bratty General Jinjur who wants to depose The Scarecrow from the throne. Tip and the Pumpkinhead come to the Scarecrow's aid with help from the Tin Man, Glinda the Good Fairy, a flying sofa, and a saucer-eyed creature called a Wogglebug.

Like a low-budget Sid and Marty Krofft TV Show! #7771 VHS • \$15

**JACK AND THE BEANSTALK**

1970 • color • directed by Barry Mahon

Former Nudie King BARRY MAHON strikes again with *Jack and the Beanstalk*, an hilariously el cheapo retelling of the classic tale shot on about five minimalist sets at Florida's Pirates World amusement park.

Once upon a time an adolescent Jack bemoans the death of his daddy and the theft of their "enchanted possessions," specifically a mechanical hen that laid golden eggs and a "harp that played beautiful tunes by itself." Jack's Ma tells him to sell the family cow for cash. Instead, Jack trades it for some magic beans that grow into a giant beanstalk. And sure enough, courtesy of some godawful effects, Jack sees the giant that stole the hen and harp, and even a bag of golden eggs. And did we mention that *Jack and the Beanstalk* is a musical too? #7770 VHS • \$15

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